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Among Our Contributors

JOHN BRUNNER —

prominent British SF and fantasy writer, who will be remembered by *F.U.* readers for his haunting *WHEN GABRIEL.....* (*F.U.*, April 1957) continues the story of the adventures of Gerald Howson, Psi.D., Curative Telepath First Class.

ALGIS BUDRYS —

Author of the recent *THE FALLING TORCH* (Pyramid, 35 cts) and of the excellent *WHO?* (Pyramid, 35 cts).

MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD —

whose interests, both as a writer and as a person, range from archaeology to geriatrics, from labor problems to San Francisco history, from Latin literature to birth control, has appeared frequently in *F.U.*

FRITZ LEIBER —

one of the truly great names in the Fantasy field, should need no introduction to any reader of this magazine.

H. BEAM PIPER —

whom many *F.U.* readers will remember for his delightful *LONE STAR PLANET* (*F.U.*, March 1957), written in collaboration with John J. McGuire, —is an authority on guns and works both in the mystery and SF fields.

IVAN T. SANDERSON —

noted scientist and lecturer, and author of numerous books including the recent *MONKEY KINGDOM* (Hanover), returned recently "from driving almost up to the Arctic circle to the very end of the new road they are bulldozing across the muskeg. We crossed rivers on barges and slept in bunks in oil camps, and ate in the roadmen's messes. We ran right into a herd of woodland Caribou; saw our bears, gamboling; and, right at the end, saw our Moose at about forty paces—a huge bull in full horn who snorted and then loped off. Mink, marten, weasels, real Ospreys, and huge ravens by the thousands." They hit the northland, as he writes—perhaps we should add that Sanderson *has* been all over the world—"at exactly the right week of the year when all the aspen and birches were pure metallic gold-orange, and the smaller things from vivid red to chocolate brown, while the ground cover of mosses and lichens is an extraordinary sort of smooth *real* olive green. The sky is bluer than I have ever seen elsewhere and the rivers and lakes are a deep electric blue in contrast."

RANJEE SHAHANI —

who had a story, *NO ROSES FOR US*, in the December 1959 issue of our companion magazine, *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, is a distinguished Indian novelist and writer who has lived in England for several years.

KATE WILHELM —

Kentucky housewife, insists that two small boys, a cat and a dog and nearly an acre of yard bordered on two sides by perennial flowers, all keep her rather busy, and still she manages to write some extremely attractive stories such as the one we bring you this month.

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

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the answer

by H. BEAM PIPER

FOR A MOMENT, after the screen door snapped and wakened him, Lee Richardson sat breathless and motionless, his eyes still closed, trying desperately to cling to the dream and print it upon his conscious memory before it faded.

"Are you there, Lee?" he heard Alexis Pitov's voice.

"Yes, I'm here. What time is it?" he asked, and then added, "I fell asleep. I was dreaming."

It was all right; he was going to be able to remember. He could still see the slim woman with the graying blonde hair, playing with the little dachshund among the new-fallen leaves on the lawn. He was glad they'd both been in this dream together; these dream-glimpses were all he'd had for the last fifteen years, and they were too precious to lose. He opened his eyes. The Russian was sitting just outside the light from the open door of the bungalow, lighting a cigarette. For a moment, he could see

the blocky, high-checked face, now pouched and wrinkled, and then the flame went out and there was only the red coal glowing in the darkness. He closed his eyes again, and the dream picture came back to him, the woman catching the little dog and raising her head as though to speak to him.

"Plenty of time, yet." Pitov was speaking German instead of Spanish, as they always did between themselves. "They're still counting down from minus three hours. I just phoned the launching site for a jeep. Eugenio's been there ever since dinner; they say he's running around like a cat looking for a place to have her first litter of kittens."

He chuckled. This would be something new for Eugenio Galvez—for which he could be thankful.

"I hope the generators don't develop any last-second bugs," he said. "We'll only be a mile and a half away, and that'll be too close to fifty kilos

of negamatter if the field collapses."

"It'll be all right," Pitov assured him. "The bugs have all been chased out years ago."

"Not out of those generators in the rocket. They're new." He fumbled in his coat pocket for his pipe and tobacco. "I never thought I'd run another nuclear-bomb test, as long as I lived."

"Lee!" Pitov was shocked. "You mustn't call it that. It isn't that, at all. It's purely a scientific experiment."

"Wasn't that all any of them were? We made lots of experiments like this, back before 1969." The memories of all those other tests, each ending in an Everest-high mushroom column, rose in his mind. And the end result—the United States and the Soviet Union blasted to rubble, a whole hemisphere pushed back into the Dark Ages, a quarter of a billion dead. Including a slim woman with graying blonde hair, and a little red dog, and a girl from Odessa whom Alexis Pitov had been going to marry. "Forgive me, Alexis. I just couldn't help remembering. I suppose it's this shot we're going to make, tonight. It's so much like the other ones, before—" He hesitated slightly. "Before the Auburn Bomb."

There; he'd come out and said it. In all the years they'd worked together at the *Instituto Argentino de Ciencia Fisica*, that had been unmentioned between them. The families of hanged cutthroats avoid mention of ropes and knives. He thumbed the old-fashioned American lighter and held it to his pipe. Across the veranda, in the darkness, he knew that Pitov was looking intently at him.

"You've been thinking about that, lately, haven't you?" the Russian asked, and then, timidly: "Was that what you were dreaming of?"

"Oh, no, thank heaven!"

"I think about it, too, always. I suppose—" He seemed relieved, now that it had been brought out into the open and could be discussed. "You

saw it fall, didn't you?"

"That's right. From about thirty miles away. A little closer than we'll be to this shot, tonight. I was in charge of the investigation at Auburn, until we had New York and Washington and Detroit and Mobile and San Francisco to worry about. Then what had happened to Auburn wasn't important, any more. We were trying to get evidence to lay before the United Nations. We kept at it for about twelve hours after the United Nations had ceased to exist."

"I could never understand about that, Lee. I don't know what the truth is; I probably never shall. But I know that my government did not launch that missile. During the first days after yours began coming in, I talked to people who had been in the Kremlin at the time. One had been in the presence of Klyzneko himself when the news of your bombardment arrived. He said that Klyzenko was absolutely stunned. We always believed that your government decided upon a preventive surprise attack, and picked out a town, Auburn, New York, that had been hit by one of our first retaliation missiles, and claimed that it had been hit first."

He shook his head. "Auburn was hit an hour before the first American missile was launched. I know that to be a fact. We could never understand why you launched just that one, and no more until after ours began landing on you; why you threw away the advantage of surprise and priority of attack—"

"Because we didn't do it, Lee!" The Russian's voice trembled with earnestness. "You believe me when I tell you that?"

"Yes, I believe you. After all that happened, and all that you, and I, and the people you worked with, and the people I worked with, and your government, and mine, have been guilty of, it would be a waste of breath for either of us to try to lie to the other about what happened fifteen years

ago." He drew slowly on his pipe. "But who launched it, then? It had to be launched by somebody."

"Don't you think I've been tormenting myself with that question for the last fifteen years?" Pitov demanded. "You know, there were people inside the Soviet Union—not many, and they kept themselves well hidden—who were dedicated to the overthrow of the Soviet regime. They, or some of them, might have thought that the devastation of both our countries, and the obliteration of civilization in the Northern Hemisphere, would be a cheap price to pay for ending the rule of the Communist Party."

"Could they have built an ICBM with a thermonuclear warhead in secret?" he asked. There were also fanatical nationalist groups in Europe, both sides of the Iron Curtain, who might have thought our mutual destruction would be worth the risks involved."

"There was China, and India. If your country and mine wiped each other out, they could go back to the old ways and the old traditions. Or Japan, or the Moselem States. In the end, they all went down along with us, but what criminal ever expects to fall?"

"We have too many suspects, and the trail's too cold, Alexis. That rocket wouldn't have had to have been launched anywhere in the Northern Hemisphere. For instance, our friends here in the Argentine have been doing very well by themselves since *El Coloso del Norte* went down."

And there were the Australians, picking themselves up bargains in real-estate in the East Indies at gunpoint, and there were the Boers, trekking north again, in tanks instead of ox-wagons. And Brazil, with a not-too-implausible pretender to the Braganza throne, calling itself the Portuguese Empire and looking eastward. And, to complete the picture, here were Professor Doctor Lee Richardson and Comrade Professor Alexis

Petrovitch Pitov, getting ready to test a missile with a matter-annihilation warhead.

No. This thing just wasn't a weapon.

A jeep came around the corner, lighting the dark roadway between the bungalows, its radio on and counting down—*Twenty two minutes. Twenty one fifty nine, fifty eight, fifty seven*—It came to a stop in front of their bungalow, at exactly Minus Two Hours, Twenty One Minutes, Fifty Four Seconds. The driver called out in Spanish:

"Doctor Richardson; Doctor Pitov! Are you ready?"

"Yes, ready. We're coming."

They both got to their feet, Richardson pulling himself up reluctantly. The older you get, the harder it is to leave a comfortable chair. He settled himself beside his colleague and former enemy, and the jeep started again, rolling between the buildings of the living-quarters area and out onto the long, straight road across the pampas toward the distant blaze of electric lights.

He wondered why he had been thinking so much, lately, about the Auburn Bomb. He'd questioned, at times, that the indignantly, of course—but it wasn't until tonight, until he had heard what Pitov had had to say, that he seriously doubted it. Pitov wouldn't lie about it, and Pitov would have been in a position to have known the truth, if the missile had been launched from Russia. Then he stopped thinking about what was water—or blood—a long time over the dam.

The special policeman at the entrance to the launching site reminded them that they were both smoking; when they extinguished, respectively, their cigarette and pipe, he waved the jeep on and went back to his argument with a carload of tourists who wanted to get a good view of the launching.

"There, now, Lee; do you need

anything else to convince you that this isn't a weapon project?" Pitov asked.

"No, now that you mention it. I don't. You know, I don't believe I've had to show an identity card the whole time I've been here."

"I don't believe I have an identity card," Pitov said. "Think of that."

The lights blazed everywhere around them, but mostly about the rocket that towered above everything else, so thick that it seemed squat. The gantry-cranes had been hauled away, now, and it stood alone, but it was still wreathed in thick electric cables. They were pouring enough current into that thing to light half the street-lights in Buenos Aires; when the cables were blown free by separation charges at the blastoff, the generators powered by the rocket-engines had better be able to take over, because if the magnetic field collapsed and that fifty-kilo chunk of negative-proton matter came in contact with natural positive-proton matter, an old-fashioned H-bomb would be a firecracker to what would happen. Just one hundred kilos of pure, two-hundred proof MC2.

The driver took them around the rocket, dodging assorted trucks and mobile machinery that were being hurried out of the way. The countdown was just beyond two hours five minutes. The jeep stopped at the edge of a crowd around three more trucks, and Doctor Eugenio Galvez, the director of the Insitutue, left the crowd and approached at an awkward half-run as they got down.

"Is everything checked, gentlemen?" he wanted to know.

"It was this afternoon at 1730," Pitov told him. "And nobody's been burning my telephone to report anything different. Are the balloons and the drone planes ready?"

"The Air Force just finished checking; they're ready. Captain Urquiola flew one of the planes over the course and made a guidance-tape; that's been

duplicated and all the planes are equipped with copies."

"How's the wind?" Richardson asked.

"Still steady. We won't have any trouble about fallout or with the balloons."

"Then we'd better go back to the bunker and make sure everybody there is on the job."

The loudspeaker was counting down to Two Hours One Minute.

"Could you spare a few minutes to talk to the press?" Eugenio Galvez asked. "And perhaps say a few words for telecast? This last is most important; we can't explain too many times the purpose of this experiment. There is still much hostility, arising from fear that we are testing a nuclear weapon."

The press and telecast services were well represented; there were close to a hundred correspondents, from all over South America, from South Africa and Austrailia, even one from Ceylon. They had three trucks, with mobile telecast pickups, and when they saw who was approaching, they released the two rocketry experts they had been quizzing and pounced on the new victims.

Was there any possibility that negative-proton matter might be used as a weapon?

"Anything can be used as a weapon; you could stab a man to death with that lead pencil you're using," Pitov replied. "But I doubt if nega-matter will ever be so used. We're certainly not working on weapons design here. We started, six years ago, with the ability to produce negative protons, reverse-spin neutrons, and positrons, and the theoretical possibility of assembling them into nega-matter. We have just gotten a fifty kilogramme mass of nega-iron assembled. In those six years, we had to invent all our techniques, and design all our equipment. If we'd been insane enough to want to build a nuclear weapon, after what we went through

up North, we could have done so from memory, and designed a better—which is to say a worse—one from memory in a few days."

"Yes, and building a negamatter bomb for military purposes would be like digging a fifty foot shaft to get a rock to bash somebody's head in, when you could do the job better with the shovel you're digging with," Richardson added. "The time, money, energy and work we put in on this thing would be ample to construct twenty thermonuclear bombs. And that's only a small part of it." He went on to tell them about the magnetic bottle inside the rocket's warhead, mentioning how much electric current was needed to keep up the magnetic field that insulated the negamatter from contact with posimatter.

"Then what was the purpose of this experiment, Doctor Richardson?"

"Oh, we were just trying to find out a few basic facts about natural structure. Long ago, it was realized that the nucleonic particles—protons, neutrons, mesons and so on—must have structure of their own. Since we started constructing negative-proton matter, we've found out a few things about nucleonic structure. Some rather odd things, including fractions of Planck's constant."

A couple of the correspondents—a man from La Prensa, and an Australian—whistled softly. The others looked blank. Pitou took over:

"You see, gentlemen, most of what we learned, we learned from putting negamatter atoms together. We annihilated a few of them—over there in that little concrete building, we have one of the most massive steel vaults in the world, where we do that—but we assembled millions of them for every one we annihilated, and that chunk of nega-iron inside the magnetic bottle kept growing. And when you have a piece of negamatter you don't want, you can't just throw it out on the scrap-pile. We might have rocketed it into escape velocity and

let it blow up in space, away from the Moon or any of the artificial satellites, but why waste it? So we're going to have the rocket eject it, and when it falls, we can see, by our telemetered instruments, just what happens."

"Well, won't it be annihilated by contact with atmosphere?" somebody asked.

"That's one of the things we want to find out," Pitou said. "We estimate about twenty percent loss from contact with atmosphere, but the mass that actually lands on the target area should be about forty kilos. It should be something of a spectacle, coming down."

"You say you had to assemble it, after creating the negative protons and neutrons and the positrons. Doesn't any of this sort of matter exist in nature?"

The man who asked that knew better himself. He just wanted the answer on the record.

"Oh no; not on this planet, and probably not in the Galaxy. There may be whole galaxies composed of nothing but negamatter. There may even be isolated stars and planetary systems inside our Galaxy composed of negamatter, though I think that very improbable. But when negamatter and posimatter come into contact with one another, the result is immediate mutual annihilation."

They managed to get away from the press, and returned as far as the bunkers, a mile and a half away. Before they went inside, Richardson glanced up at the sky, fixing the location of a few of the more conspicuous stars in his mind. There were almost a hundred men and women inside, each at his or her instruments—view-screens, radar indicators, detection instruments of a dozen kinds. The reporters and telecast people arrived shortly afterward, and Eugenio Galvez took them in tow. While Richardson and Pitou were making their last-minute rounds, the countdown prog-

ressed past minus one hour, and at minus twenty minutes all the overhead lights went off and the small instrument operators' lights came on.

Pitov turned on a couple of view-screens, one from a pickup on the roof of the bunker and another from the launching-pad. They sat down side by side and waited. Richardson got his pipe out and began loading it. The loudspeaker was saying: "*Minus two minutes, one fifty nine, fifty eight, fifty seven—*"

He let his mind drift away from the test, back to the world that had been smashed around his ears in the autumn of 1969. He was doing that so often, now, when he should be thinking about—

"*Two seconds, one second, FIRING!*"

It was a second later that his eyes focussed on the left hand view-screen. Red and yellow flames were gushing out at the bottom of the rocket, and it was beginning to tremble. Then the upper jets, the ones that furnished power for the generators, began firing. He looked anxiously at the meters; the generators were building up power. Finally, when he was sure that the rocket would be blasting off anyhow, the separator-charges fired and the heavy cables fell away. An instant later, the big missile started inching upward, gaining speed by the second, first slowly and jerkily and then more rapidly, until it passed out of the field of the pickup. He watched the rising spout of fire from the other screen until it passed from sight.

By that time, Pitov had twisted a dial and gotten another view on the left hand screen, this time from close to the target. That camera was radar-controlled; it had fastened onto the approaching missile, which was still invisible. The stars swung slowly across the screen until Richardson recognized the ones he had spotted at the zenith. In a moment, now, the rocket, a hundred miles overhead,

would be nosing down, and then the warhead would open and the magnetic field inside would alter and the mass of negamatter would be ejected.

The stars were blotted out by a sudden glow of light. Even at a hundred miles, there was enough atmospheric density to produce considerable energy release. Pitov, beside him, was muttering, partly in German and partly in Russian; most of what Richardson caught was figures. Trying to calculate how much of the mass of unnatural iron would get down for the ground blast. Then the right hand screen broke into a wriggling orgy of color, and at the same time every scrap of radio-transmitted apparatus either went out or began reporting erratically. The left hand screen, connected by wiring to the pickup on the roof, was still functioning. For a moment, Richardson wondered what was going on, and then shocked recognition drove that from his mind as he stared at the ever-brightening glare in the sky.

It was the Auburn Bomb again! He was back, in memory, to the night on the shore of Lake Ontario; the party breaking up in the early hours of morning; he and Janet and the people with whom they had been spending a vacation week standing on the lawn as the guests were getting into their cars. And then the sudden light in the sky. The cries of surprise, and then of alarm as it seemed to be rushing straight down upon them. He and Janet, clutching each other and staring up in terror at the falling blaze from which there seemed no escape. Then relief, as it curved away from them and fell to the south. And then the explosion, lighting the whole southern sky.

There was a similar explosion in the screen, when the mass of nega-iron landed—a sheet of pure white light, so bright and so quick as to almost pass above the limit of visibility, and then a moment's darkness that was in his stunned eyes more

than in the screen, and then the rising glow of updrawn incandescent dust.

Before the sound-waves had reached them, he had been legging it into the house. The television had been on, and it had been acting as insanely as the screen on his right now. He had called the State Police—the telephones had been working all right—and told them who he was, and they had told him to stay put and they'd send a car for him. They did, within minutes. Janet and his host and hostess had waited with him on the lawn until it came, and after he had gotten into it, he had turned around and looked back through the rear window, and seen Janet standing under the front light, holding the little dog in her arms, flopping one of its silly little paws up and down with her hand to wave goodbye to him.

He had seen her and the dog like that every day of his life for the last fifteen years.

"What kind of radiation are you getting?" he could hear Alexis Pitov asking into a phone. "What? Nothing else? Oh; yes, of course. But mostly cosmic. That shouldn't last long." He turned from the phone. "A devil's own dose of cosmic, and some gamma. It was the cosmic radiation that put the radios and telescreens out. That's why I insisted that the drone planes be independent of radio control."

They always got cosmic radiation from the micro-annihilations in the test-vault. Well, now they had an idea of what produced natural cosmic rays. There must be quite a bit of negamatter and posimatter going into mutual annihilation and total energy release through the Universe.

"Of course, there were no detectors set up in advance around Auburn," he said. "We didn't really begin to find anything out for half an hour. By that time, the cosmic radiation was over and we weren't getting anything but gamma."

"What— What has Auburn to

do—?" The Russian stopped short. "You think this was the same thing?" He gave it a moment's consideration. "Lee, you're crazy! There wasn't an atom of artificial negamatter in the world in 1969. Nobody had made any before us. We gave each other some scientific surprises, then, but nobody surprised both of us. You and I, between us, knew everything that was going on in nuclear physics in the world. And you know as well as I do—"

A voice came out of the public-address speaker. "Some of the radio equipment around the target area, that wasn't knocked out by blast, is beginning to function again. There is an increasingly heavy gamma radiation, but no more cosmic rays. They were all prompt radiation from the annihilation; the gamma is secondary effort. Wait a moment; Captain Urquiola, of the Air Force, says that the first drone plane is about to take off."

It had been two hours after the blast that the first drones had gone over what had been Auburn, New York. He was trying to remember, as exactly as possible, what had been learned from them. Gamma radiation; a great deal of gamma. But it didn't last long. It had been almost down to a safe level by the time the investigation had been called off, and, two months after there had been no more missiles, and no way of producing more, and no targets to send them against if they'd had them, rather—he had been back at Auburn on his hopeless quest, and there had been almost no trace of radiation. Nothing but a wide, shallow crater, almost two hundred feet in diameter and only fifteen at its deepest, already full of water, and a circle of flattened and scattered rubble for a mile and a half all around it. He was willing to bet anything that that was what they'd find where the chunk of nega-iron had landed, fifty miles away on the pampas.

Well, the first drone ought to be over the target area before long, and at least one of the balloons that had been sent up was reporting its course by radio. The radios in the others were silent, and the recording counters had probably jammed in all of them. There'd be something of interest when the first drone came back. He dragged his mind back to the present, and went to work with Alexis Pitov.

They were at it all night, checking, evaluating, making sure that the masses of data that were coming in were being promptly processed for programming the computers. At each of the increasingly frequent coffee-breaks, he noticed Pitov looking curiously. He said nothing, however, until, long after dawn, they stood outside the bunker, waiting for the jeep that would take them back to their bungalow and watching the line of trucks—Argentine army engineers, locally hired laborers, load after load of prefab-huts and equipment—going down toward the target-area, where

they would be working for the next week.

"Lee, were you serious?" Pitov asked. "I mean, about this being like the one at Auburn?"

"It was exactly like Auburn; even that blazing light that came rushing down out of the sky. I wondered about that at the time—what kind of a missile would produce an effect like that. Now I know. We just launched one like it."

"But that's impossible! I told you, between us we know everything that was happening in nuclear physics then. Nobody in the world knew how to assemble atoms of negamatter and build them into masses."

"Nobody, and nothing, on this planet built that mass of negamatter. I doubt if it even came from this Galaxy. But we didn't know that, then. When that negamatter meteor fell, the only thing anybody could think of was that it had been a Soviet missile. If it had hit around Leningrad or Moscow or Kharkov, who would you have blamed it on?"

THE DETROIT CONVENTION — an editorial aside

We will report, in considerable detail, on the 17th World Science Fiction Convention, held in Detroit this past Labor Day Weekend, in the next issue (*several pages of pictures and a round-up of reactions from Forrest J. Ackerman, Belle C. Dietz, John Magnus, Burnett Toskey and Ted E. White*). If I had the room this month—and the time (*particularly the time!*)—I would of course have commented on the Convention in my column, but this has had to be held over for still another month, so I am taking this opportunity to talk here about the *Detention*.

I liked it.

OK—things went wrong now and then! So what? No program like this—depending as it does on personalities rather than automata—is foolproof! I feel the Detention Committee deserves a loud vote of thanks from all of us who were there, who enjoyed their hospitality (*didn't you?*).

Finally—let's meet in Philadelphia on November 14th!

The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society's Annual Conference will be held that day at Philadelphia's fabulous Sheraton Hotel, 1725 Pennsylvania Boulevard. Oswald Train and George Heap are in charge of arrangements, and have asked us to invite all of you who live in the Philadelphia area. Check with Mrs. Harriet Kolchak, 2104 Brandywine Street, Phila. 30, if you live in Philly.

the girl in the bottle

by ALGIS BUDRYS

THE NEW man rolled over with a groan and woke up with his face jammed against the corner of a broken brick. He jerked himself upright in his end of the two-man foxhole, and looked at Folley. "Whu—?"

"Hello," Folley said. "My name's Zach Folley."

The man continued to look numbly up from under the brim of his helmet, which had been blackened and blistered by the countless times it had been used as a cooking pot. His eyes were puffy and threaded with blood. From the way in which he was twitching his lips tentatively, like a fish not sure of being in water, Folley could see the man was still nine-tenths asleep.

A missile went by overhead and the new man shuddered, drawing muddy knees up under his bearded chin, and wriggling his back in against the side of the hole.

"It's all right," Folley pacified him, because he was now afraid that the

man was completely battlehappy and might become violent. "They're not after you or me. They don't know we're here. It's just our machines fighting their machines, now. It's all being done by the automatic weapons systems. There's nobody alive in the cities anymore. Not since the nerve gas."

The new man muttered something that sounded like: "...alive in the cities..." and Folley, who thought the man was arguing with him, said:

"No. Not anybody. I know it's hard to believe. But they told me last month, when I was a clerk up at Battalion, before Battalion got smashed up, there's nobody alive anywhere in the world except around here in North America." Folley's jaw quivered involuntarily, as it always did when he tried to picture the world empty of life, bare of movement except for the dust-fountains where the automatic missiles kept coming in

like meteorites hitting the barren Moon.

"I said," the other man replied with patient distinctness, "I *know* there's nobody left alive in the cities. But I don't care." He fumbled around behind his back and suddenly held up a bottle—a flat, half-pint glass bottle, unbroken, with only mildewed traces of a label but with most of its contents still there. "Not as long as I've still got *her*."

"What do you mean 'her'?" Folley was badly upset, now. The other man had showed up out of nowhere, last night, mumbling and calling softly to find out if anybody was still alive on the defense perimeter. When Folley answered, he had stumbled down into the hole with him and had fallen in a heap without saying another word. Folley knew nothing about him, except that he obviously wasn't one of the enemy from across the valley, and now he began to wonder whether this might not be some kind of traitor, or propaganda spreader, or at any rate some kind of enemy trying to get him drunk. If Folley got drunk, then the enemy would be able to sneak past him to the rear, without warning. Folley did not know what lay in the rear, anymore—he was deathly afraid there was so little left in the world that if the enemy once got by him, they would have won the war.

Folley could not be clear in his mind about this. He knew he wasn't being completely sane, himself. But he was doing the best he could, for a man who had been a clerk up until last month and had then been given a rifle for the first time since Basic, way back ten years ago. He had stayed in his hole, living off the rations of the other men who had gradually been killed on either side of him, and he always fought off the few enemies who were left to make attacks. They would come up

through the barbed wire and the minefields, always losing some men, and being driven back at last, but they had been closer and closer to Folley with each attack, even though there were only five of them left.

Folley was practically out of ammunition, and had to choose his shots carefully, and this gave them time to get in close. They had been getting close enough so that he had learned to recognize them as individuals—there was a tall, scar-faced one for instance, who was very cautious but persistent, and a short, stubby one with a nervous grin who shouted insults in pidgin English—and he was sure they knew by now he was all alone on the perimeter. Today they would be braver than ever, and he was down to one clip of eight shots. He had been hoping the new man—who had been such a great hope, for a while—would have more ammunition, but he didn't have as much as a sidearm. All he had was his bottle, and Folley shied away from it like poison.

"Throw that away!" he cried out.

The man hugged the bottle and hunched himself over it, to protect it from the sweep of Folley's arm. "Oh, no!" he said doggedly. "No—I'm not going to throw *her* away!"

The fact that he did not offer to fight, but only tried to protect the bottle, impressed Folley very deeply. It was such an unusual way for someone to react that Folley decided it must be because the new man really did feel the bottle was more important than anything else in the world.

"What about her?" he asked soothingly.

"The girl," the new man explained, his face as innocent as a child's under the beard, and the dirt, and the blood, and the sallow, doughy texture of his skin. "The girl in the bottle."

On the other side of the valley, Folley could see the enemy moving

around, now. It was too far away for an accurate rifle shot, and neither side had anything else available to it. The enemy soldiers did not bother to hide themselves or their movements. Folley would have been badly upset if they had tried.

It occurred to him that if either side—they or he—were to violate established routine in some way, it would be a disconcerting and possibly fatal tactic to the opposition. But he could not seem to draw any conclusions from this thought, or to fully understand what to do with it. It drifted out of his mind as foggily as it had first entered, and he looked at the new man again. "The girl in the bottle," he said. "Is there a girl in there?"

"Always," the new man said. He weighed the bottle in his hand. Earlier, it had seemed to Folley, that the glass was brown. Now he saw it was actually a delicate shade of green. A flash of sunlight sparkled on it as the new man held it up. It was like the sudden sideward turning of a young girl's eyes as she walks by on a park path. Folley blinked.

"Who is she?"

The new man said: "The girl." He became shy. "You know," he said under his breath, not because he was trying to keep Folley from hearing but because he was afraid of how Folley would react if he did grasp his meaning.

But Folley only looked at him blankly. "I don't—"

"Here," the man said tenderly, offering him the bottle.

With his hand carefully cupping the bottle, for fear his fingers might shake and loose their grip, Folley uncapped it and touched his lip to the rim. He winced away from the contact. Then, tilting the bottle very cautiously, he took a few swallows. Lowering the bottle, he slowly recapped it and handed it back. The taste slid down the back of his

throat, warm, musky, and bitter-sweet.

He looked around him, at the rubble and the tornup equipment, and the fly-clustered things like waterlogged feather pillows in too-tight dirty olive drab pillowslips, and the cracked old stumps of trees. He could feel that there was no longer any clear separation between the raw soles of his feet and the glutinous fabric of his socks. He plucked absently at his shirt, and shifted his seat uncomfortably. A V of slow antipersonnel missiles went hunting by overhead, and he cowered, though he knew that the minimum concentration of men required to attract such a missile was twenty within a hundred yard radius. Abruptly, the missiles seemed to lurch in the air. Bits of machinery whirled out of their noses, and then they fell forward and glided steeply into the ground down in the valley bottom. They had run out of fuel, and had jettisoned their warhead fuzes before crash-landing in open territory.

He shook his head violently, having followed the missiles' downward arc all the way to the ground. "She was the first girl I ever loved," he said to the new man, his voice confidential. "We were walking hand-in-hand, along the glassy gray lake where the pelicans swam in the park, under the eyes of the buildings. There were forsythia bushes like soft phosphorus explosions beside us, and there were squirrels fat enough to eat that scampered along beside us. She was wearing a pale green gown and black slippers, and her russet hair came down to her shoulders. I remember I was afraid strands of it would catch on the thorny trees which hung their branches low over the walk, like barbed wire.

"My God," he said, staring in awe at the bottle, "it was beautiful!" He sprang to his feet and shouted across the valley: "Beautiful! Beau-

tiful, you sons of bitches! You and your bombs and your gas and your chemicals—you and your war, your death, your rapine! Beautiful, you bastards!"

He crumpled back down into the hole, shuddering. He hugged his knees and rubbed his cheeks against the old camouflage cloth stretched over his bones. He had forgotten why he was here, and now that he had been reminded, he was trying desperately to forget, again. But he remained aware that the bottle was infinitely precious—that the new man was perfectly right in having saved it.

"What's your girl like?" he asked the new man.

"As lovely as yours," the man answered. He looked over the side of the hole, down into the valley. "They're coming," he said. "The enemy. It's another attack."

"The last attack," Folley said. "We've got to save her!" he cried out in panic. "I don't care what else they get—we can't let them get her!"

The new man smiled. "There's nothing else."

"Nothing else?"

"Just you and I, and the few of them down there. There's nothing else left in the whole world."

Folley believed him. There was no uncertainty in the new man's voice at all. But Folley was so shocked at believing him; at finding himself so ready to give up what he thought to be a proper attitude of confidence, that he burst out indignantly: "What do you mean? Not as long as General Gaunt's still alive. He can save us if anyone can, and we would have heard if he was dead!" He clung bitterly to his belief in the genius of General Gaunt, who was his personal hero of the war.

"I am General Gaunt," the new man said, tears in his eyes. He lifted the bottle in salute.

"General Gaunt?" Folley said.

The new man nodded. He extended the bottle. "Would you like another?" He turned his glance momentarily in the direction of the enemy, who were scurrying across the valley floor like baby spiders. "There's time before they get into range."

"No," Folley whispered, "no, we've got to save her!"

"Save her?" Gaunt pawed brutally with the back of hand under his eyes. "Save?" He stood up, feet apart, back arched arms outflung to embrace the world. "Save!" he cried, and the long echo coursed down the valley. He collapsed forward, the enemy bullet bulging a lump from the inside at the back of his thonked helmet. Folley snatched the bottle as he fell, and patted it.

The enemy were leaping up the rocks, and twisting in behind old guns and trucks, hurdling up over the gassy old bodies and the broken ammunition boxes. The short, stubby one was in the lead, screaming out: "Now die! Now die! Now die!" The scar-faced one was bringing up the rear, and this one Folley shot, the carbine banging his shoulder so hard that he clapped his left hand over the shirt pocket where he had put the bottle.

The other four enemies did not stop, and Folley saw that they had nerved themselves for this attack, and would not stop, but would soak up his ammunition until it was gone, and would overrun him. Two of them were firing at him, keeping him down, while the short one and another man advanced.

Then there was nothing to do, for the short one and his companion would soon be at the lip of the hole, and once they did that, all was lost. Folley carefully put the bottle down and sprang to his feet, firing his carbine. He was immediately hit by shots from the two covering riflemen, but he had known that would happen. He shot at them, and killed

them, because it made no difference what happened with the nearer two if the others were alive. Then he turned his gun toward the short one's companion, and shot him, but that was the end of it, for he had used up all his ammunition.

"Now die!" shouted the little enemy. "Now we have your all!" He did not seem to know he was alone, and he held his rifle arched up, ready to thrust down with his bayonet.

Folley pushed him back with a nudge of his carbine butt, like a man stumbling in a crowd, but there was blood running down over his hands, and the carbine slipped away. The little enemy recovered his balance and came forward again. "You die!" he shouted, froth at the corners of his mouth because he was so frightened, "Now you die!"

And it was true. Folley could feel the pain like the teeth of a pitchfork in him, and the cut strings of his muscles would not hold him up.

"Now we rule!" the enemy cried, bayonet flashing down, and for a long moment Folley hung on the point of his rifle, all the wind knocked out of him as it had been once before in his life, when he ran down the long park slope after the

girl and tripped over a root, and never afterward could be sure of her admiration.

Then he was flung back, and he lay kicking at the bottom of the hole. "Now ours!" the enemy cried. "All world!" He was straddling the hole, and his victorious glance flashed around him. Slowly, as he looked, dismay crept into it. "All world?"

Folley reached toward the bottle. He began to inch forward very quietly and painfully. Before the enemy saw what he was doing, he broke the bottle against a stone.

The enemy heard the sound, and stared down. He leaped into the hole and scrambled at the wet splotch on the ground. Then he whirled up, his fingers bleeding, and slapped Folley's face:

"Why you break? Why you break?" He slapped Folley again, and began kicking him. "I wanted! Why you no give me?" He spun back toward the shards of glass in the sun, trying to find a few drops caught in the hollow of some curved fragment, but whatever there had been was evaporated, and the glass had turned dull brown. Folley, seeing it through a glistening fog the color of a gray lake, finally felt like a hero.

NEXT MONTH-

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the season of the babies

by MIRIAM ALLEN de FORD

A BABY WHISTLED from the Nursery, and Ilswyth rose hastily and ran to turn it over, feed it, and clean it. When she got back she noted the scowl on Ragnar's face. He had ordered everything held up till she returned; he was a stickler for full Council meetings, most of all in this extraordinarily important one. Ilswyth slipped apologetically into her chair and the conference continued.

"It's bad luck," Ragnar said, "that the ambassadors from Sol should be arriving at just this moment, in the middle of the Season of the Babies. A few weeks more, and the Choosing would be over. Then we would be in the best possible position to create the favorable impression we must give if we are to be accepted. But right now—"

"Couldn't we have put them off?" Only Eghar ever dared to interrupt the president.

"Hardly," Ragnar snapped. "We've been asking for Federation member-

ship for nearly 100 years. How would it look if, when they finally send a delegation empowered to make the final decision, we had to plead that this was a time when we weren't exactly at our best? They probably manage their own Season more efficiently."

Ilswyth, as Nursery Chief, had an idea.

"If we could—not advance the whole Choosing, of course; that would be impossible—but select some that will obviously not be Chosen but are otherwise well along? And just say that the others weren't ripe yet?"

"Pretty difficult. They know already that in one respect we aren't up to the standard of half a dozen at least of the present Federation members—they have interstellar flight and we haven't; they can come to us but we can't go to them, unless they take us. We don't want to rub it in by acknowledging that we're not up to them in other ways as well—it's a matter of planetary honor.

"No," Ragnar stood up to indicate that the Council was about to be adjourned. "If we can't put our best foot forward, as we'd hoped to do, we must just do the best we can. Ilswyth, I want you to stay over, and we'll discuss your idea. The rest of you may leave, but stand ready for a final briefing as soon as I know the exact time of arrival. We're in constant communication with them, and I should know definitely by tonight. Any questions before you go?"

"Are the ambassadors all from Earth?" Harkon asked.

"Yes, naturally; the other inhabited planets of Sol are all Earth colonies, and with the Outer Galactic Federation capital on Earth, the ambassadors would be most likely to be from there also. But don't worry—they all speak Standard Galactic besides their own languages, just as we do.

"Now, Ilswyth, about—"

There were three ambassadors—two men and a woman. The crowd around the newly remodeled spaceport was vaguely disappointed; these were ordinary-looking beings, very much like themselves, and not even grandly appareled, but dressed like travelers to their own colonized planets. Nevertheless, there was an air about them of dignity and consequence, such as the people were accustomed to in their own High Council, and most of all in their president. They were proud to realize that their own could meet these important strangers on an equal footing. There were banners and flowers and music, but the welcoming exercises were brief. Gorth, who was in charge of entertainment of the visitors, had decided that too much ostentation might be read as complacent self-assurance: time enough for real ceremony when they were accepted into membership in the Federation.

By the time the three had been greeted in the Council Chamber, and

then taken to the dwellings allotted them, for a rest, it was nearly two-moon hour. Tonight the guests would meet their official hosts at a light repast, followed by a moonlight tour in ground-cars to show them the capital city and its environs; the first session would be held tomorrow morning. Ragnar and the Council members, watching the Earthians, were gratified; the ambassadors were most courteous and complimentary, apparently delighted with everything they saw and heard. It was an auspicious beginning, and the plenary sessions could not but improve on the initial good impression.

The two men were named Gonzalez and Richter, the woman was named Andree. They must all be people of prominence and standing on Earth, though their precise positions were a little puzzling because of natural differences in political economy between the two planets. However, they had credentials of the highest kind, empowering them to investigate and query at their discretion and to make final recommendations, after discussion with the similarly empowered president and Council, which would be binding on both parties.

Everything went swimmingly as the first session began. Ragnar laid bare the financial status of the planet, its governmental make-up, its technical achievements (acknowledging frankly that in some respects these last might be inferior to those of Sol and perhaps of some others of the Federation). The ambassadors drew up a statistical list of the matters about which the Federation had to be satisfied before a planet was admitted into membership. They started to get down to details.

A baby whistled.

At the sound Ilswyth, as usual, rose to her feet. The woman ambassador, Andree, stopped her. "What is that signal?" she asked, startled.

"Signal?" Ilswyth glanced, per-

plexed, at Ragnar. He answered for her.

"It's only a baby. We equip them with whistles so they can let us know when they're hungry or wet. Ilswyth will just run in and attend to it—she's in charge of this Nursery. We're only a small planet, you know," he excused himself. "We have to double up in some of our official positions."

"A baby?"

All of the Council were red with embarrassment.

"I'm sorry," Ragnar apologized. "We had hoped you wouldn't notice. By pure bad luck your visit has happened to come in the middle of our Season of the Babies."

"I don't understand," interposed the ambassador Gonzalez. His Standard Galactic had a strong Spanish accent. "Do you mean that here you have children just at one particular season?"

It was Ragnar's turn to be astonished.

"Why, of course," he faltered. "Don't you—doesn't everybody?"

"Of course not," said Richter bluntly; his German accent was as strong as Gonzalez's Spanish. "On Earth babies are born any day of the year. Do you mean that you here have a rutting season, like our lower animals?"

"I don't know what that means. In the spring, naturally, there is the urge to reproduce, and so in the next winter our women of reproductive age have their babies."

"That is a rutting season," said Richter dryly. "Then are all your marriages celebrated in the spring?"

"Marriages? I don't understand that word."

"What are you," Andree demanded crisply, "promiscuous?"

"Nor that word either, your honor." Ragnar was uncomfortable. "Perhaps we can get back now to our serious discussion, and later I can satisfy your curiosity about these minor trifles."

"But this *is* important," said Gonzalez, frowning. "Your family system seems to be completely out of line with that of any humanoid planet in the Federation. We might be willing to make adjustments, but we should have to know all the details. For instance, it seems to me that if all your women have babies at the same time every year, it must put a serious strain on your economy. All the extra expense—and all these women withdrawn from their work to care for their infants—And besides, unless you have a high infant mortality, which would be another indication of lack of social development, it would appear that you must have a constantly mounting population, with all the consequent depressive effects on your living standards."

The other ambassadors nodded their heads in agreement. The Councilors gazed at one another, puzzled. Gorth looked to Ragnar for permission to speak.

"I believe, your honors," he said, smiling, "this is merely a little semantic misunderstanding. Naturally, the bad effects you mention would ensue if, like the lower animals, we preserved all our off-spring. But of course we do not—on the contrary, the Season is the time when our economy gets its annual uplift. We are fully as civilized as you, I am sure, in that respect." He hesitated, seeing the lack of comprehension on the three alien faces. "You mean," he ended lamely, "you do *not* have our system? We had supposed that it was common to all civilized planets."

"Are you saying that you let your babies *die*?" cried Andree, outraged.

"Please, Gorth, let me explain," Ragnar interrupted.

"Yes, explain," said Richter grimly. Ragnar picked his words carefully, at a loss to make clear what to all of his people was the normal and universal way of life.

"In the winter all the babies are

born. For the first three months they are cared for in the Nurseries—there is one in each city, with a government official, like Ilswyth here, in charge. Then comes the Choosing, when trained observers make careful surveys and decide which babies are physically and mentally superior. These we keep and rear. We—all of our people you have met—were once, of course, among the Chosen of our year. It is a eugenic measure."

"And the others? The ones not 'Chosen'?" inquired Andree sternly.

"They are disposed of, naturally—under the best possible conditions, I assure you. They are very young still—they cannot realize. And there is no pain whatever."

There was a long silence around the conference table. Then Richter said: "It seems at the best a very wasteful system. Why don't you practice birth control instead?"

"That would be immoral," said Ragnar stiffly. "Every human being has a right to be born, to take its chances on being Chosen for survival. Remember, we preserve *all* the superior ones and rear them so as to develop all their potentialities. We could not do that if the others—the ones who did not make the grade—did not provide the financial means."

"Provide the financial means—how?" Gonzalez asked. Andree broke in on him.

"But the mothers!" she exclaimed. "The poor mothers! How can you take a woman's baby away from her and—*and* murder it? The worst totalitarian regimes in our evil past never did that. I should think the mothers whose hearts you've broken—yes, and the fathers too—would simply rise up and wipe out a government that was so brutally cruel!"

The whole Council was in a turmoil, with everybody trying to speak at once. Raynar, bewildered and frantic, tried in vain to restore order. Desperately he signaled to Eghar—

least subordinate but most persuasive of the Council—to be their spokesman. He cleared his throat and said slowly:

"Your honors, let us reassure you. Our government is not cruel. We break no hearts. Ilswyth, you are the only woman on the Council. I suppose a baby of yours is among those in the Nursery here. Will you tell our guests how you feel about the Choosing?"

Ragnar flushed with vexation. He should have thought himself of calling on Ilswyth. Here was another feather in Eghar's cap. If he wasn't careful, Eghar would be the next president. But he managed to smile benignly.

"An excellent idea, Eghar. Tell them, Ilswyth."

The three pairs of alien eyes fixed themselves on her.

"B-but we're all one, aren't we?" she stammered, shy to be the focus of attention. "I mean, no m-mother *owns* her baby, does she? Ever since we are little girls, we look forward to the day when we shall be able to produce children every year for our people—the boys do too, though of course they can't be sure which special ones are theirs. We are all so proud if at the Choosing there are unusually many who are good enough to keep, even though that means an extra call on the education fund. And if one of our own is Chosen, we almost burst with pride. I have had eight babies so far, and three of them have been Chosen;—that is one of the biggest reasons, I'm sure, why I was elected to the Council last year."

"But what about the five who weren't 'Chosen'?" cried Andree. "How did you feel when they were killed before your eyes?"

"But they weren't!" Ilswyth exclaimed, horrified. "How can you think that? It is all done decently and in order."

"But a mother surely becomes at-

tached to her own baby—"

"How could she? It is taken away at once to the Nursery, and she never sees it again. I am in charge of a Nursery, so I am pretty sure which one is mine, but why should I feel differently toward it than toward any other? We are all one people, all children are our children. Suppose a woman is a teacher—should she care more because one of the children she teaches happened to come from her body?"

"And doesn't she care when she knows that her baby has been—disposed of?"

"Why should she? We made them all, we do with them what is best for all of them and all of us. It is wonderful to know that one's own baby has been Chosen, but if not—neither are most of the others, and better luck next year."

The three ambassadors sat speechless, doubt, anger, and astonishment on their too expressive faces. Gorth, always a peacemaker, jumped into the breach.

"I think," he said smoothly, under Ragnar's approving nod, "that we have talked enough without a break. Let us resume our discussion—or, better, go on with more important questions, in the afternoon. It is almost time for the official banquet which is scheduled for today. Our cooks have outdone themselves to please you, and you will want to go to your lodgings first to rest and refresh yourselves. The ground-car is waiting, and it will call for you again in half an hour."

"I'd still like to know about 'providing the financial means,'" said Gonzalez stubbornly.

"Later, later!" Ragnar replied. Gonzalez let himself be persuaded, and the three were handed over to the ground-car driver. The Council members did not follow them; at Ragnar's gesture they waited until they were alone, then huddled for a hasty con-

ference.

"This is most annoying," the president said abruptly. "It never occurred to me that there could be such a difference in customs between two advanced cultures. Apparently they do their Choosing before conception instead of after birth. It seems most immoral to me, and distinctly uncivilized."

"And ridiculously wasteful," Harkon added. "They must have to pay for the training of what children they do have, out of the public funds; we pay for it out of our government monopoly and the patriotic devotion of our citizens."

"People are so attached to their own ways," worried Gorth. "It's little things like this that divide them. This contretemps might cause the collapse of all our negotiations."

"Oh, I can't imagine it will be as bad as all that," Ragnar soothed him. "They can't be so provincial. But it *has* made things more difficult, I confess. To tell the truth, I think we've shown our civilization to be more advanced than theirs, and they'll surely be reasonable enough to realize that when they've thought it over. Certainly they haven't attained our solidarity, the oneness of empathy we take for granted. I suppose it's because only a few centuries ago the inhabitants of Earth were slaughtering their own kind in wars. You notice they still evidently keep up their separate national languages."

"And then they make a fuss about our disposing of our own babies as we see fit!" said Ilswyth bitterly.

"I know. But I'm afraid, Ilswyth, in our endeavor to do them the highest honor we've made a little miscalculation. Is it too late to change it?"

"I'll try. I'll go over there right away. It's upsetting, after we nearly broke our necks to make a special effort for them."

"Well, that was against my better judgment anyway, you'll remember—

though I never dreamed they wouldn't be impressed by the honor. Do the best you can, but if you're too late it won't really matter. I'll just say nothing, instead of calling it to their attention, in a nice, modest way, as I'd intended. We'll simply charge up the waste to profit and loss. After all, it doesn't matter how much we spend if we get their recommendation for acceptance into the Federation."

"If!" snorted Eghar. "What new outlandish quirk will they show next?"

"We must hope for the best," said Ragnar.

The banquet went well. The visitors ate the unaccustomed food with grace, and drank the unaccustomed wine with pleasure. Once or twice they asked, "Delicious—what is it?" but only of the salad and the fruits. Ilswyth hadn't been able to have any major change made in the menu, but she'd arranged to have the delicate meat sliced in the kitchen and smothered in a complicated sauce, which quite spoiled the taste of the highly luxurious food for the natives; but under the circumstances that didn't matter. She sat next to Gonzalez, and saw to it that his glass was refilled as soon as it was emptied.

But Gonzalez was used to stronger wine than theirs. As soon as the meeting adjourned to the Council Chamber again, he repeated his question: "How does your system provide a profit to your educational fund?"

By this time Ragnar was ready. "Isn't it obvious, my dear sir? The fewer children there are to educate, the more money is left for the benefit of those who are preserved."

The woman delegate, Andree, had eaten little and drunk still less. "I'm afraid you will think me rude," she had murmured to Harkon, seated next to her, "but I'm on a slimming diet." Harkon, from a world that liked its women statuesque, was hard put to it

to find a polite rejoinder.

Now she followed Gonzalez right up. "But you said—it was Gorth who said it, I believe—that your Season of the Babies was the time when your economy gets its annual uplift. Surely you didn't mean merely that you saved money by it?"

"In other words," said Richter harshly, "what *do* you do with those superfluous babies? Sell their bodies to the medical schools or the tanners, and use the proceeds to educate the ones you save?"

"Oh, your honor!" Ragnar was shocked. "We would *never* do anything as gross as that—we, a people as highly cultured as yourselves! Of course not—we wouldn't dream of it. We—how shall I put it? When farmers have the remains of a crop left over, they plow it back into the ground to benefit the next crop. That is what we do—the Unchosen babies are the part of the crop we turn back to those who made them."

He looked at the three horrified faces before him.

"But only to the very best of our people, I assure you," he explained carefully. "It is a great privilege to be allowed to contribute to the education fund. They must have a good record in every way before they are even allowed to bid."

Suddenly Andree screamed loudly. "That—that meat!" she shrieked. "That tender, delicate meat!"

She collapsed in hysterics. Richter sat as if frozen. Gonzalez turned green and abruptly vomited into his handkerchief; he had eaten more than either of them.

The Council members fixed amazed eyes on their president. His face was flushed with anger.

"We had assumed," he said coldly, "that you of the Federation were at least as civilized as we. We paid you the greatest honor we can offer a guest—we made a special effort to provide you, though you arrived be-

fore the Choosing, before they were really ripe. We had not expected such a peculiar reaction—such an insult."

"What is the *matter* with you?" Ilswyth burst out indignantly. "The babies are part of us; they will go to make up next year's babies, too. Aren't *you* all one people, as we are? Or are you so upset because we turn them back to our people for money—money which goes to educate the Chosen? Would you like it better if we just wasted our substance?"

"But their souls, their souls!" Gonzalez shouted. Ragnar shook his head uncomprehendingly. Andree was still weeping wildly. "Cannibals!" Richter hissed. "Savages!"

White to the lips, Ragnar held up his hand to silence them.

"Forgive us," he said with elaborate courtesy, "if we have perhaps not understood your social standards as well as we had imagined. May I inquire, since you are so offended by our customs, what are your own in this respect? Since it seems so dreadful to you that we consume our own, how do you on Earth secure the proteins necessary for your health—from vegetable sources alone?"

"Why," answered Gonzalez, startled, "from meat, of course!"

"Meat!" Ragnar was triumphant. "You see—you do eat meat, just as we thought! Is it perhaps some taboo that forbids you to eat your meat young and tender? That seems very strange."

"Not human meat!" yelled Richter, "meat from animals, of course, you cannibal!"

There was a ghastly silence. None of the Council members dared to meet the eyes of another.

"From—" Ragnar could hardly speak. "You actually mean," he said painfully, "that you, human beings like ourselves, take into your bodies, to become part of your own and your children's substance, the flesh of vile,

alien creatures? Our earliest ancestors, even before they became civilized, never fell so low as that!"

He glanced at his colleagues. Dismay and disgust were on every face. Ilswyth suddenly clapped a hand to her mouth and dashed from the room into the Nursery.

For a long time nobody on either side seemed able to speak. Ragnar finally rose to the need for action, but it was his own Council he addressed, ignoring the strangers.

"I am afraid," he said, "that for 100 years we have labored under a profound misapprehension. We have applied constantly for membership in the Outer Galactic Federation, not so much because we needed anything it could give us, as because we felt it a blot on our planetary honor to be excluded from what we had supposed to be an alliance of highly civilized worlds.

"And now we suddenly discover that the very planet which controls this Federation has a culture so disparate from ours that it seems impossible we could ever work together in amity. True, Sol and some of the other systems have interstellar travel; true, we do not, as yet. But such technical advances are extraneous. The very heart, the inner meaning, of our society, it appears, is abhorrent to Sol. And I need only look at you, or search my own feelings, to realize how infinitely more abhorrent theirs is to us.

"I am sorry indeed that these ambassadors"—he glanced at the silent three—"should have had to undergo the trouble and expense of a useless journey. . . . Shall we take a formal vote? If so, will you, Gorth, ask Ilswyth to—oh, here she is again: good. What is your pleasure?"

"No vote needed," said Eghar gruffly. "We agree." There were assenting murmurs all down the table.

"Then—" Ragnar had recovered his suavity; he even managed to smile at

the flabbergasted delegates. "I regret that our conference has failed. I trust this will not have unpleasant political repercussions for you. But it seems obvious that our social systems are too far apart in spirit for us to wish any longer to be affiliated with you.

"You will be wanting to leave at once, I am sure. We shall do everything possible for your comfort and convenience. When you return to Earth, tell your principals that we withdraw our application for membership in the Outer Galactic Federation, at least until such time as other planets have reached the same high state of culture we have attained."

The aghast ambassadors came to life.

"Why, you—!" The veins stood out on Gonzalez's forehead; his voice was strangled. "If you think for a minute we would admit—"

"Dirty cannibals!" yelled Richter again.

Andree, outraged beyond speech, merely sat and stared.

"Unspeakable non-human-flesh-eaters," Eggar retorted, under his breath. Ragnar stopped him with an

abrupt gesture.

"Let's not act any more like barbarians than is necessary," he said quietly. "You have heard our decision. This conference is at an end."

"Let's get out of here," Gonzalez growled.

The Council watched the three ambassadors file silently through the door. Then Ragnar turned to them briskly.

"Harkon, if you will prepare the formal statement to be given to our people—and make special note of the fact that we rejected membership: I don't think we need harrow anyone's feelings by explaining exactly why.

"Eggar, you and Gorth had better get busy now on the preliminary set-up for this year's Choosing. Ilswyth—"

In the Nursery, a baby whistled. Ilswyth ran to turn it over.

"A quick crop this year," said Ragnar happily. "I think we'll get a really good boost to the education fund. In spite of the sauce, those precocious specimens we had today were extraordinarily tasty."

NEXT MONTH-

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more about the **ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN**

LAST TIME we cited a case which might be called *The People versus Yeti*. All we were able to present to the court was a number of facts. It is now time for the public prosecutor to present his case for the people.

The offense alleged is, as we pointed out, actually without all man-made law but it is nonetheless highly obnoxious to The People and is, in the opinion of established authority, potentially dangerous to the peace of mind and well-being of humanity as a whole. The contention of the prosecution is, however, that an actual fraud has been perpetrated upon the People. The argument is as follows. It is contended that certain persons about thirty years ago did with deliberate intent to defraud the public state that there are wild men living in the region of perpetual snows at higher altitudes in the Himalayas and, further, that this plot or scheme was instigated for profit through the

dissemination of false propaganda and publicity which is likewise an offense against the people. A list of names of the originators of this fraudulent story is produced and it is pointed out that they are all travellers and that the tales told by such people are known to be wholly unreliable as is popularly recognized in the common expression "just a traveller's tale".

These actions the prosecution contends are dangerous, subversive, and criminal. The case was tried thirty years ago in the British courts and a clear-cut conviction obtained but unfortunately, some of the defrauders had been foreign to that jurisdiction and had escaped indictment by seeking refuge in their homelands and keeping their mouths shut.

Now, the prosecution alleges, these persons have reorganized, recruited new felons, and have also subverted some respectable citizens, among them certain persons of prominence

engaged in other activities of the highest probity. These last were obviously duped and in no case did they have any inkling of the intent of the organizers, but when they did discover their real objectives, most of them made public recantations of a most specific order.

This plot, it is made clear, has now become of international complexion and therefore of great complexity. Like other subversive movements it lay dormant or went underground during World War II but it had since emerged in ever greater vigor and in the much more fertile field of Cold War. In fact, this case of the *People versus Yeti* must now be regarded only as a test case, for, as the prosecution reluctantly admits, these enemies of the People are now to be numbered in the thousands, and the whole matter has become one of international import. For these reasons the court is asked to admit evidence not only of Yeti but also on a long list of associates, named and identified by place of operations as follows:

- (1) In the Pamirs district of Uzbekistan, southern Russia; name unknown; height, about six feet; dark complexion; hairy.
- (2) In Kashmir, northern India; name unknown, very tall and bulky; hair, brown.
- (3) In Kumaun, northern India; name *Sogpa* alias *Jungli-Admi*, about four feet tall.
- (4) In Nepal; *Metoh Kangmi* alias *Banjakri*, alias *Mirka*, alias *Migu*; tall; pale complexion; dark fur, mane; narrow, pointed head.
- (5) In Nepal; operating in lower forested valleys; *Yeti*, alias *Yeh-teh* or *Mi-teh*; height three feet; russet or dark red coat; no mane.
- (6) In Sikkim, known under a variety of names; description very similar to that of Yeti.
- (7) In Bhutan. (*Metoh Kangmi* seems to operate in this territory also but records show he may be joined there by #8)
- (8) In southern Tibet; known by various names and in English also by the nickname "The Abominable Snowman". Height, eight to ten feet; very powerful build and broad shoulders; dark complexion and overall dark hair. Said to specialize in Yak-rustling. Chinese authorities believe he may be of a clan known as *Gigantopithecus* or which they have the bones of some early ancestors.
- (9) In the Khangai Mountains area of the Mongolian Peoples' Republic; name *Alma* or *Almas*; height about five feet six; hairy; rather intelligent; organizer of mobs and indulges in "rumbles".
- (10) In Assam and upper Burma; *Tok*, alias "The Mouth Man"; very tall and heavy-set; covered in dark coarse hair; specializes in breaking and entering.
- (11) In Malaya; exact identity not determined and may be a gang. No names known. Operates in high mountains except for occasional raids on valleys. Wanted for murder and cannibalism but only of *thin* people. Some of the gang are inveterate peeping-toms; they have been known to use their womenfolk to solicit young Malayan girls.
- (12) In Sumatra; name *Orang Pendek*, or "Little Man"; about four feet six; very hairy with long head of hair; partly arboreal; distinguishing marks: very broad feet with narrow, pointed heel.
- (13) In Tanganyika, East Africa; name *Agogwe*; height barely four feet; hair russet colored; face like old man.
- (14) In Guinea, West Africa; name unknown; height about four feet; hair of head long and reddish, and clothed all over in red-

dish-brown hairs.

- (15) In northern Quebec Province, Canada; name unknown; very tall, dark complexion and fur all over; lives by rivers and lakes but does not like to enter water; eats fish; very shy; no criminal record.
- (16) In British Columbia, Canada; name *Sasquatch*; numerous aliases; height about seven to eight feet; covered with two to six inch brownish hair but dark mane on head. Complexion light; palm and foot-prints man-like; wanted for kidnapping, rape, theft, assault and battery, and vandalism.
- (17) In Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, California; *Bigfoot*; height about eight feet, weight 750 to 800 lbs.; hair of head dark and long to shoulders, of body short, thick and rich brown; feet human but 16 inches long. Very inquisitive but shy at present and given to playing with heavy objects. Wanted on old police record for three murders and possibly for kidnapping.
- (18) In forested lowland areas and foothills around the Gulf of Honduras, Central America; name *Dwendi*, with two Spanish and several Amerindian native aliases; height, less than four feet; no body hair, and hair of head not known. Is said always to cover head with palm or other branches in the daytime as the great apes do at night. Mostly nocturnal; wanted for theft and alleged assault. May keep pets.

The plot, it is alleged, was originally hatched in central Asia in the independent state of Nepal in the Himalayas. The principal involved was at that time misidentified, being called by the ridiculous moniker. "The Abominable Snowman". This was subsequently found to be an alias for a semi-mythical criminal of Ne-

palese folklore called *Metoh kangmi* which may be loosely translated as "the filthy wildman of the mountains", a term applied to homicidal maniacs and other murderers that are exiled for life from their communities in that land. When this confusion was pointed out, the syndicate responsible for the fraud apparently changed their tactics and dreamed up a sort of parody of this filthy wildman which, they stated, contrary to being about eight feet tall, hairy, and so strong it could carry off yaks, was only about four and a half feet tall, was covered with reddish-brown fur, with a slight mane, and had skin the color of a white man, and splayed feet with an enormous little-toe. This they named the Yeti. In doing this, the prosecution points out, the perpetrators—even if they had initially only intended to perpetrate a harmless hoax—transgressed the dividing line between what is within the law and that which without it, for they caused to be circulated phoney photographs purporting to show actual footprints left by this creature in snowbanks at altitudes above any at which human beings can live, even with the warmest clothing and footwear.

These photographs were offered to "experts" for their expert opinions but it was some time, naturally, before any of these experts would expose himself to the ridicule attendant upon his wasting his time—paid for by the institution for which he worked—to look at such obvious frauds. Finally, however, the popular outcry against this criminal action became so great that the government was prevailed upon to issue some official statement. Fortunately, the authorities concerned were of the British Museum (Natural History Division) which is a department of British Civil Service administered by the Home Office—equivalent to the Ministry of the Interior in this

country—so that their pronouncements bore both scientific and governmental approval and stamp.

Actual examination of the photographs was not, of course, necessary for several reasons, principal among them being the *known fact that man can not live* in such places as alleged by the conspirators are inhabited by their filthy exiles. The statement issued was nonetheless quite specific, since it was made for the edification of The People who, of course, are not experts. It stated that the photographs were fakes in that they were not made at high altitudes in the Himalayas but that they were of bear tracks because there are no people at high altitudes nor any other animals there that walk on two legs. And there the matter would have rested had it not been for further fiendishly cunning activities on the part of the "syndicate".

Meantime, the "syndicate" somehow, and it is still not known just how, managed to get at a well-known man of the highest probity then engaged in work of national importance. This gentleman—none other than Eric Shipton—was engaged in exploring and mapping a route up which British mountaineers might approach Mount Everest with a view to being the first to climb to its summit. Then they, or they agents among the now thoroughly subverted local "natives", in some way got ahead of Mr. Shipton's party and, presumably using some kind of mechanical device, deliberately laid out over a mile of impressions in the snow across a mountain pass at an elevation of 18,000 feet. This was done without so much as a single smudge being left on the snow other than these tracks and, what is more terrifying, in a place where nobody—even Mr. Shipton—knew in advance his party might be passing. This shows the devilish cunning of the "syndicate" and its enormous international pow-

er, resources, and above all, the quality of its espionage system. It may also possibly explain how an experienced and thoroughly sane, sober, and cautious man like Shipton could have fallen for this deception and even, despite the debilitating effects of high altitude on normal human initiative, have even taken the trouble to photograph these marks in the snow both as a whole, and individually with an ice-pick laid alongside one, to indicate its size.

His actions naturally prompted a vigorous reaction on the part of established authority because even a harmless hoax immediately assumes a criminal aspect if it is perpetrated upon Government, and this was exactly what the "syndicate" had done, for the conquest of Everest was officially backed. The extraordinary thing was that the explorer, Shipton, seems to have been so deluded (or could it be cowed?) by the syndicate that, to everybody's mystification and horror, he presented himself as a witness *for the defense!* In fact, he crossed over and took up permanent residence *behind* the Snow Curtain; an action that once again demonstrates the invidious appeal of this international organization and the power of its nefarious propaganda.

A clear case of fraud had thus been demonstrated and "proved" to the satisfaction of the court of public opinion but, so adroit had the syndicate become that, before ever the case could be brought to trial, they had initiated so many other incidents, subverted so many more prominent people, spread so much libelous doctrine, and carried out so many other criminal actions throughout three continents that the authorities became confounded. And almost all of this they accomplished by the use of a secret *machine* or device which they had developed sometime back in the late 1920's—to wit, a "track-making engine",

To date, we (the People) frankly have no inkling as to who developed this device, or where, or exactly when. We have not got the machine nor any blueprints of it, and nobody has even seen it, and nobody can say how it works—not even our best engineers and mechanics. Even more frustrating is the fact that some crude prototype of this machine was apparently in existence during the time of the Gupta cultural ascendancy in India, between 320 and 480 A.D., and it is therefore likely that the modern counterpart has been developed from some very ancient concept. Since it is of Asiatic or Oriental origin, some have suggested that it might be of a non-physical or even of a mystical nature; though this is, of course, quite absurd. However, whatever its origin, the really serious aspect of its rediscovery is its use by this syndicate today, its clandestine transport to distant and inaccessible parts of other continents, and specifically to North America.

Meanwhile, and starting in 1932 at the latest, its use in Asia had become what can only be described as rife. Perhaps, indeed, this machine is now in mass production, for it has been used all the way from western Outer Mongolia, southwest to the Pamirs, thence east along the whole range of the Himalayas, then south through Assam and Burma to Malaya, and even in the dense forests of the island of Sumatra. Apparently emboldened by their success with this invention in Asia, the syndicate then moved to Africa where they initiated a sort of experiment with a miniature model both in Tanganyika and Kenya on the eastern uplands and in what is now Guinea on the west coast. Maybe transport problems prevented them from carrying the big machine, for the tracks left in Africa are diminutive compared even to those of a small man.

However, they manifestly managed

either to transport to or to manufacture in North America a very large machine and it is here that some people have suspected the Communists of having infiltrated the higher echelons of the "Syndicate". This may, for the moment, be discounted, though the former make no bones about their deep interest in this international plot and, as is their wont, are already fishing in these troubled waters. This was clearly brought out in this Court last month.

The use of this machine on our continent has been the most bold move yet undertaken by this gang, and their choice of location for operations has been more than simply clever. This sort of thing is deadly in a democracy and especially in a highly industrialized democracy such as ours for what these international crooks have done, without we, the long-suffering and over-trusting People realizing, is to locate in certain as yet not fully developed areas of forested mountains in our northwest, stretching all the way from southern Alaska via the Canadian Pacific mountain provinces and Washington, to Humboldt County in northern California. Moreover, they have invariably chosen areas where there are still "natives" living close to their land as they have done since the last retreat of the ice, and the syndicate has put the machines to work in such a way that they produce results that are almost exact imitations of the stupid legends of those benighted "natives". The criminal intent of this action should be, but alas is not, apparent to everyone.

By planting fraudulent physical evidence of an ancient American Indian myth far in the deep woods but just ahead of road-building crews, forest rangers, timber-cruisers, and other unreliable and imaginative persons, they have managed, in one move, to completely hoodwink the Press, confuse the public, and mis-

lead the scientists and other experts, so gaining a firm foothold on our continent and, in one case, not a hundred miles from a considerable industrial center. This, it is contended, is a menace so real to our whole cultural concept and even to our national fiber that the Court is beholden to take action.

But there is still another alarming aspect of this international conspiracy. The syndicate seems to have moved on to our sister republics in Latin America. Once again they have employed the tactic of choosing locations where the poor "natives" promulgate folk-tales either of giants or fairy-like pygmies or "little-folk". The worst example is that of Guatemala and British Honduras where, in the heavily forested areas, the natives tell silly stories about tiny, humanoid creatures wearing large hats woven of palm-fibers, called *Dwendis*.

Up till now activities in South America are, on the other hand, not too serious, for they do not seem as yet to have put this *Machine* to use there, but rather, to have relied upon disseminating tales of giant monkeys among responsible travellers and other people who cannot be relied upon to report accurately what they shoot, measure, weigh, and photograph. The only photograph they have been able to produce so far is obviously a fraud and a very crude one, being nothing other than that of a large Spider Monkey (genus *Ateles*) propped up on a kerosene case so that its long tail does not show as photographed from ground level. Nevertheless, their virus is already at work in that continent.

Although the most serious aspects of this business are to us, of course, recent events in our own country, we must take a broader view of the whole case, for our attitude to it will affect our vital relations with both "emerging" Africa and our real rival—"already-emerged" Asia. It is already an

integral part of the Cold War and it is a vital issue in the age-old battle for the Soul of Man. On the decision of this Court, and thus of you of the jury representing The People, may rest the very destiny of our race—even if we *do* get to the Stars. Therefore, before the prosecution calls its first witness, you should be warned that your responsibility extends far beyond the walls of this courtroom. The evidence presented by the prosecution is massive but is mostly repetitive and, apart from that submitted by two sources, it is actually almost wholly irrelevant, mostly immaterial, and singularly incompetent.

The first actual witnesses to anything that indicated there might be somewhere in the world living creatures that are sufficiently human to be classed as other than "animals" but yet so non-human as to be unapproachable by men, have left no record. Unless stories of giants, pixies, and so forth have some basis in fact, it is probable that the earliest record still remains to be found in texts composed in ancient times in the region centering around Sikang in southwest China. There are constant references to such not-completely-human creatures in the very old folk-tales and the mythological affirmations of all the countries for a thousand miles radius around that province. There are also some recorded statements that seem to be of a more precisely factual nature, such as that there once were—here and there—truly "wild men" with whom even the least educated and most primitive illiterate locals did not and could not deal. Some of these stories from Ceylon, southern India, and northern Siam are most categoric, speaking of small humans with exceptional features such as long hair down their backs, and so forth. However, there was nothing precise enough to warrant what we call scientific cognizance until the British explorer,

Hugh Knight, said that he had almost run into a maned, naked, humanoid creature, toting a crude bow and arrow, in the rhododendron forest of the inner Himalaya in 1921. The founders of the "syndicate" may have been travellers. So the first witnesses for the prosecution were other travellers.

The witnesses, being known and respected, kept absolutely mum lest they open a chink in the collective armour of their fraternity. You can't have stories floating around that the public won't or don't want to believe, especially coming from professional travellers. The next thing you know, all travellers will be doubted and the funds supplied to them by scientific and official bodies, and even by wealthy private sources will dry up at once. If, therefore, a man like Hugh Knight made such a statement, everybody in the travelling fraternity tried to forget and ignore it. But when it was brought up in court they immediately asserted that the author was suffering from mountain sickness, or hallucinations caused by travel weariness, or was quoting somebody else—all things that, they affirmed, they knew only too well from first-hand experience might happen to the best of men.

But all those brought to the witness stand were not of this ilk. There was also the new crop of Himalayan explorers—Kaulbach, Tisdale, Shipton, Smythe, Dittert, Roch, Wyss-Dunant, and others—who had said that they had seen tracks and other things. Most of these backed down of their own accord when confronted with the solid wall of orthodoxy and particularly by the professional zoologists, and mostly because, without the continued goodwill of these men, they—these professional travellers—would have found their grants, contributions, and even their free facilities, without which they cannot carry on their explorations,

cut off at the source; namely, in the financial committees of those organizations to whom they apply for funds.

True, some of them, and notably Ronald Kaulbach, remained extremely doubtful and puzzled and their books reflect their quandary. Try as they may to conform with the wishes of the experts at home by saying that "perhaps" or "probably" the humanoid tracks they found in the snow or mud and photographed were indeed made by a Snow Leopard going fast, a huge Grey Wolf putting its hind paws in the tracks of its front paws on a steep slope, or by an Isabelline Bear, a Giant Panda, or even, *in extremis*, some as yet unidentified species of giant Langur Monkey, a few of them still could not refrain from observing that the tracks looked in no way like any of these things, all of which they had often seen. Kaulbach even went so far as to point out that both bear and panda, and even wolf and snow leopard are totally unknown in (and unknown to the inhabitants of) the area where he saw his alleged *Metoh kangmi* tracks.

There was quite a procession of traveller witnesses who all told substantially the same story. A few added slight folderols to the allegation that they had come across long series of footprints of a humanoid nature in the snow at high altitudes in the Himalayas. One even went so far as to say that he, in company with several others had watched a number of gigantic bipedal creatures stomping about in the snow far above them near Everest and that he had then gone up to the place where they had been seen through field-glasses and found enormous tracks in the snow like those of elephants walking on their hind legs. This statement was made by Ruttledge on his second exploratory expedition to find a route to climb Everest. It was so categoric and startling it was ignored.

Then two Americans somehow got to the Himalayas in 1938 and reported having boulders rolled down steep slopes on their pack train, hearing ghastly yells among the mountain crags, and finding cairns on the utmost peaks moved or demolished. These statements were also ignored on the rather amusing grounds that everybody suffers from "mountain sickness and hallucinations" above a certain point without oxygen (they had oxygen) and that *Americans*, of course, could not know anything about mountaineering, especially in such an area as the Himalayas.

The next group of witnesses called to the stand were members of the general public such as are alleged to be exemplified by "housewives" (whatever they may be), and such excellent, pragmatic, and hardworking persons as garage-owners, airline pilots, and amateur archaeologists. One and all gave similar answers to all questions by the prosecutor; namely, in substance, "Oh! Go on! I don't believe you". But they at least had the integrity to point out that they had never been anywhere near the Himalayas and had no idea what they looked like and therefore did not feel qualified to be specific about any of the traveller's tales. They also, one and all, stated flatly that they believed these to be lies because it was obvious that there could not be anything in such places that could make such tracks in the snow, or yells in the mountains; or which could roll boulders or tote yaks. Since men without shoes would freeze to death at that altitude in short order, they observed, either the tracks must be made by some animal or they never existed in the first place and the people who said that they had seen them and photographed them were therefore at the best, plain liars and at the worst, crooks.

The Press has, of course, never been called upon to testify, but in

exercising its privileges, it has nevertheless played a very prominent part in all these hearings. "Knowing" that the whole business was a phoney even before it was first suggested, and having said so from the outset, The Press then simply sat back and watched its point being "proved" over and over again by the scientists and other "experts". It has had a field-day. The misnomer "Abominable Snowman" was too good for it to pass-up, and the "human" interest in the whole business far transcended that of sea-serpents or even poltergeists. What is more, the whole thing, coming from the upper reaches of the perpetually chilled Himalayan uplands, was more or less unprovable and also irrefutable: for what percentage of their readers had ever been to or would ever go to those places? Besides, the thing was just absurd enough to warrant considerable space, especially when previously respected explorers—themselves always open to a few jibes—so often seemed willing to fall for the gag and come up with statements that got them thrown out of the better scientific and sporting clubs.

But there is one class of witness that has given the prosecution not a little trouble and caused them considerable embarrassment. These are the "sportsmen", among whom are a lot of extremely crusty old gentlemen used to giving orders to "natives" but totally unaccustomed to having their integrity questioned by anybody—least of all by what they call "snivelling little clerks back home." These gentry have all actually resided in India—usually pronounced "In-jah"—for many years, and "back home" to them implies the British Isles. None of them care a fig about science, or experts and they are not beholden to societies for grants in aid. Most were military men and are retired. Some of these stalwarts resorted to the devilish de-

vice of writing to the *Times* (of London, of course) under pen names. One in particular signed himself "Balu" and proved to be a most hostile witness. It was believed that this name covered that of a very prominent person, and the writer implied this in no uncertain terms, stating flatly that he had not only seen the tracks on several occasions but specifying exactly where and challenging any stay-at-home idiot who had not been to precisely those places as often and over as many years as he had, to call him a liar. Very fortunately for the prosecution, World War II broke out just then and the "experts" were never called upon to take this up. On the whole, the sportsmen, though called as witnesses for the prosecution proved to be very nearly to a man, subversive. They cared not a damn for anybody or anything except their honor as sportsmen and raconteurs; they had the utmost disdain for anybody who had not gone sporting in the Himalayas; and, most disturbing of all, they could almost all prove that they *had* been there!

But, despite fear of verbal or literary retribution in the press the People were not much impressed by these sportsmen because, after all, they were not "experts". True, they may have served in 'In-jah' all their lives and pounded the Himalayas from end to end for political or sporting purposes or both, but they were outdoor men and sportsmen and therefore obviously incapable of distinguishing a man's footprint from that of an ox. A'so, the funny letters were at the *front* of their names (not behind them) like Lt. Col The Right Honourable Something-or-other, instead of Somebody-or-other, PhD., FRS, FRMCP, et al. Therefore these men obviously, could not know the difference between a live Langur Monkey, a runaway Tibetan murderer, a Bengali pilgrim, or an Isabelline

Bear. As for telling the foot-tracks of any of these from those of a Wolf, Snow Leopard, Giant Panda (which lives only in China), or Lesser Panda, it was manifest to both press and public they obviously could not know what they were talking about. To be able to make such distinctions, one has to have sat at a laboratory bench in a museum or other institute in Europe or America for a number of years, have a lot of letters after one's name, and have "critically" (though why always *this* epithet I cannot tell you) examined the dried or pickled remains of all animals said, (according to the labels currently attached to them) to have been obtained in or brought from the area under discussion. To go to, or have been in, that area is actually rather suspect as any expert who ever did so—and, in this case we can name half-a-dozen—has shown distinct signs of having become contaminated by local gossip and the daydreams of the natives. These sportsmen have obviously been far too long in such places.

The prosecution therefore turned with considerable relief to the "experts" who alone could be relied upon to be reliable witnesses. These were the "scientists" and particularly the zoölogists. For some reason, the anthropologists have been by-passed and this is somewhat of a mystery in view of the human-interest in this whole affair.

"Science", as has now been amply pointed out by many, is a Holy Cow. It was founded in the utmost sincerity and has been prosecuted with honest diligence but, unfortunately, about a century ago it got mixed up with and enmeshed in something quite else. This was Technology, which may best be defined as "bottle-washing and button-pushing". Technology is the descendant of artisanship and technologists are the aftermath of the artisans, but they have none of the artisan's vision or in-

tegrity. They live in a vacuum and earn their living by rule of thumb. When artisans made tables, armour, bedspreads, and so forth, they contributed much to the general stream of life and even to progress, though they were always a reactionary lot, but when, as technologists, they tried applying the discoveries of science to everyday life, they became automations. (Today, they are being *replaced* by automations, which are much more efficient.) When the technologists took over science they buried it under the expressionless term *philosophy*, and then proceeded to try to codify its findings in things called *textbooks*. In these are enshrined all that technologists can understand of science.

Thus, Western Man got a new Bible and one that works, for by following the textbooks, you can do such things as get voices or even pictures out of the "air", build washing machines and space rockets, or even name every animal in the Himalayas whether you have been there or not. However, by inference, anything that is *not* in the textbooks can *not* be done. Wonderful refinements and innumerable complications are added to the textbooks all the time, but anything new cannot be, simply because this is the sum total of technical knowledge. It works, and nothing more is needed. The book is closed, and therefore anything that is not already in it, is manifestly spurious.

Unfortunately, most of the persons holding positions of so-called "scientific" authority are today not scientists at all but technologists. They can see only black or only white; they know nothing of anything that is not in their bible; and they will fight tooth and claw to keep anything not now in it out of it. No trick is too low, no device too sordid, no lie too great to maintain their orthodoxy of mediocrity. As an example let me cite the case of the fish-like animal

now known as *The Coelocanth (Latimeria)*.

Until 1937 all animals of this group were thought to have been totally extinct along with all their allies for at least sixty million years. The first live specimen was dredged up off the east coast of South Africa in 1938. It was preserved by a Dr. Latimer, curator of the Port Elizabeth Museum in that country, and was examined, pictured, and described by her. It was five feet long. I have a clipping of a statement made a year later by one of the leading ichthyologists (fish experts) in this country about this then *alleged* discovery. It states that Dr. Latimer was a liar and a dangerous fraud—just like that—and that she ought to be forcibly suppressed along with her manuscript, which was manifestly of a purely fictional nature, before the gullible public heard of her outrageous claim and harm might be done to "established science". However, I have another clipping of another statement made to the same wire services by the same "*scientist*" but almost exactly ten years later, after five of these fish had been landed and fully examined and described. This states, and I quote, "Probably one of the greatest zoological discoveries of the age but then, we (sie) had always expected it because it is, after all, a shallow water fish." I can only add that *Latimeria* is a profoundly deep-water fish.

One of the major objectives of "established science" today is to maintain the dykes against the rising tides of discovery. As it is belaboured from first one side with a coelocanth and then from another with a three-foot elver, and then from another by the bones of an eight foot, man-like ape from southern China, then a 500-million year old type of shellfish from the Pacific, baby seals from miles inland in the Antarctic, and all sorts of other unorthodoxies, it

twists and squirms and becomes ever more virulent. We have seen just this sort of thing happen again and again with *other* orthodoxies throughout recorded history. Their end is always the same. As the tide of real knowledge rises higher and higher, the dykes become ever comparatively weaker until but one tiny chink that lets but one tiny drop of truth through may initiate a flood that sweeps away the entire complicated and redundant structure. There are chinks and cracks in the dykes of "scientific" orthodoxy already but so far the technologists have, like the pharisees of old, managed to plug them by resorting to such devices as stating that the crack was always expected at that point because the water was, after all, shallow there!

Thus, when The People appealed to the Experts in their guise of "scientists", the Court was subjected to a tirade that far surpassed anything devised by, for instance, such high-pressure rogues and phoneys as the Nazis. These experts stated, one and all, and without any real qualifications, that the whole thing was a black lie. (We would point out that nobody can be an expert on anything that nobody has, let alone he, not examined and studied. As the "experts" assert there is nothing to examine or study, they can not be expert about it.) At first they denied even the existence of the tracks and all other concrete evidence, ranging from noises to transported cairns, unidentifiable hairs, and even piles of dung. Being unable to prove to the Court's satisfaction that all the photographs were fakes, however, they then stated just as positively that these were of tracks made by either barefoot men, bears (of one of three kinds), or large Langur or Snub-nosed Monkeys; or, they added, for good measure, Giant Panda, Wolves, Snow-Leopards, or even "large birds", asserting that all of these either

walked on two feet or could do so, or that they placed their back feet exactly in the tracks left by their front paws when travelling with a certain gait. The suggestion that some of the tracks could be made by "wild men" was categorically dismissed as *impossible*; the suggestion that they might have been left by other types of humanoids—sub-men, ape-men, men-apes, or even by super-apes—was not even discussed, being considered beneath their dignity. For good measure, however, one after another of the brethren took it upon himself to put in a plug for the "scientific" hierarchy by *stating*—not just *implying*—that anybody who believed otherwise was not only insane but criminally insane.

In fact, the experts fully "confirmed" the prosecution's contention that the whole thing is a loathesome, subversive plot, deliberately engineered by a worldwide group of charlatans for profit and which, if tolerated and not utterly squashed at once, could have most dire consequences to the doltish, stupid, non-expert public—i.e. We, The People. They implied then, and they still assert almost to a man, that these consequences are detrimental to our moral, ethical, and religious well-being; and on this the Prosecution rests its case. When court reconvenes next month we will hear what Counsel for the defense has to say and we will quote from the statements of his witnesses as we name them and identify them.

Then, after a summation by the Court, and receiving your instructions from the Bench, you, the Jury of The People, shall decide whose contentions you feel disposed to support in this battle for our souls. This is an abstruse case but it is a test case; whatever is decided, it is going to be written indelibly into our lore forever. So, consider the evidence carefully, my peers.



our saucer vacation

by FRITZ LEIBER

"DAD," I SAID, "how does a planet come to blow up?"

Dad briefly closed two of his eyes—the "thinking" ones. Then, "I don't rightly know, Son," he told me. "Let's go see."

That is like Dad—thoughtful but to the point, no pretenses, and no waste motions! Dad is the sort who could strangle two and a half Antarctic multibrachs while using his sixth and seventh tentacles to read the latest supplement to the *Acia Cosmica*.

At first Sis and Shorty thought he was kidding, but I have come to know Dad well enough to know that he never kids about anything involving a lawful desire to enlarge consciousness. (Or unlawful, for that matter, if he knows you well enough. But don't tell Mom.)

"Let's see..." Dad continued. "I have a sabbatical due, it happens. Galaxy Center is a hard master, but every googolth day the mills of the gods grind a little gold dust. I'll

pulse Vrup and find out what planets are budding. Happens the old sock is pretty full of dinero—we could even squeeze out a trip to one of the Magellanic Clouds or Andromeda if that's where we have to go to find a lusty pod getting ready to pop..."

Mom knew he wasn't kidding either. She turned a faint purple and began to introspect like fury. Dad took no notice. Dad told me once, in private, that that is the best way to handle Mom. Women have to suffer their way through things, he said, and turning purple once in a while actually does Mom good.

Two orbits later Dad wafted in from the office waving the tickets. "Vrup pulsed over," he said, "and let me help him scan for buds. We found a beauty right in our own galaxy, out toward the rim. Mother won't have to pack our intergalactic underwear after all." He grinned at us kids. "I dropped in on your mentors," he told

us. "Updating your three long vacations is okay with them, but Sis will have to coach Shorty on Intermediate Galactic History II and III and finish weaving her Stellar Tribes tapestry, while you, my young heptapus—" He looked at me with all five eyes) "—will have to keep up with your tensor calculus class all on your lonesome."

That's like Dad too—the heavy tentacle and the light touch. Modest as well—to all outward appearances Dad isn't a very important guy, he likes it that way, but what he says has a way of counting with the really important people, such as Vrup.

I wasn't poisoned too purple by the news about vacation homework, though I didn't pretend to like it. Multidimensional geometry comes easy if you have seven tentacles to feel it out with. Shorty and Sis raised a stink of course, but Mom made them blow it out of the home.

I sometimes think that, for Dad, Education and the Cosmic All-Father are one and the same.

The tickets were for the instantaneous jump to the neighborhood of the star warming the bud world. There we would contact the Tour Boss.

Would the Tour Boss run our lives and be a tyrant like the old Hep-tarchs?—Sis wanted to know.

"I suppose he can try," Dad said, thickening his tentacles aggressively.

What was the name of the planet we were going to? Shorty demanded.

"It's still just a number in the galactic charts," Dad revealed. "In the hundred-odd argots the natives use it is variously referred to as—" (Dad suddenly began to grunt—turns out the natives use sound for communication—"das Welt, el mundo, Terra... oh yes, and Earth.")

What were we going to do when we got there and were we coming back in time for the swimfests?

"If you don't mind, we'll live the future as it's served out to us, one day at a time," Dad informed him dri-

ly, "and just hope we don't meet any green weavers, especially the lambent kind."

Dad wouldn't say another word about green weavers and I couldn't find any references to them in the thought capsules from his library I now began to soak up—*Planets of the Swarm, Dawn Cultures, Rim Worlds*, Vrup's own *The March of Consciousness, Good Manners for Galactic Sight-Seers*, and so on.

I found out a good deal about how bud planets come to suicide, though. It seems that when most infant races discover fission and fusion, they are still in a war phase. They got to experimenting with underground atomic explosions, or they stockpile their fusionables too deep, or their nations even try to mine and counter-mine each other—and pretty soon if they don't watch their step they trigger the Core Effect and flame out as a micronova.

If they get over the psycho-social hump of the primitive war phase, well and good. They discover the Galactic Union for themselves and are admitted as junior members, with much whoop-tee-rah.

If not—well, they wouldn't have been good neighbors anyway, and astronomer always squeeze a lot of technical information and plain sad-distic enoyment out of a micronova.

In the meantime, however, while it's deciding whether or not to pop, the bud planet is just about the most interesting object in the whole cosmos. Alerted by the Mind Watchers who from their extragalactic eyrie keep an extrasensory eye on all burgeoning orbs, students and specialists and just plain sensation-seekers come swarming in from all over the galaxy (and a good many from outside it) to feed their minds and watch the slightest hint that they have become the leading actors in the universe's most exciting melodrama, that for the moment they are putting on the Big Show—it would botch their free psy-

cho-social choice if they caught on—so the whole business is pretty carefully policed, even though all us cosmicians are considered thrillingly mature. (Dad says no.)

Of course it is all supposed to be in the interests of Science and Education, but I know for a fact that a lot of folks visit bud planets just for kicks—because they happen to have the necessary dough and pull, and even Mind Watchers have been known to blink at the rule book. A sorry state, maybe, but that's the way the universe is corrupt.

Anyway, Dad says that even deepdyed villains and custard heads have a right to all the Education they can wangle.

As we waited our turn at the translation point—Shorty restless and squirming, Mom introspecting at core depths—I told Dad a little about my reading.

"Seems now that we're due to go," I said modestly, "I've already got most of the answers to my original question."

"That's the way Education works, Son—by anticlimax," Dad said with the flip of a tentacle. What he told me next he tight-beamed, so Mom wouldn't catch it. "And I wouldn't be too sure that you're just going to see a textbook in action. The real yorfis always has greener fangs than the nightmare."

The trip was a great disappointment to Shorty—no suns flashing past meteor-scarred portholes. Just "Prepare for translation!" and—*blip!*—there we were floating along with a lot of other heptapussies and various galactic beings inside the great transparent sphere of a spatial reception center, looking from a distance of about three diameters at the planet of our choice.

The Shell of the Reception Center was almost invisible. Air pressure and not inherent rigidity kept it spherical. We were just a gaggle of greenish translucent heptapussies free-fall-

ing against a background of star-span-gled night, except for the raggedly-tentacled star that warmed this volume of space and the blue-brown planet that had lured us here.

Earth (to use Dad's grunt) seemed to have more water than land. The two continents I could see looked like two gorged grinnis, one clutching an ice cap, the other hanging onto his tail. The continents on the other side, I discovered later, made a more confused picture—maybe a yorfis killing a grunch, while a fat sway-backed flutch quaked in terror nearby. A real crazy orb.

For ten pulsations it was awe-inspiring. Then Shorty started to squirm and ask about the bathroom, Sis spotted a female of our acquaintance we'd never dreamed of running into here, Mom whamped up out of her introspection and started to gossip like mad with said female (which must have been a great relief to Dad) and Dad himself said to me, "Come on, Son, let's waft around and find the Tour Boss."

Less than an orbit later we were happily settled in our own living quarters. What was far more exciting—to me, at least—yes, and just plain astounding—we had a flying saucer for our own exclusive use!

Dad had flashed a letter from Vrup and the Tour Boss had tied himself into knots being obliging.

It bothered me sort of—that suggestion of bribery or at least special privilege. I told Dad how I felt.

"Son," he said, "always remember that we've got heptapi to work with, not angels. Happens I'd been doing some extra körtling for Vrup and he wanted to show his appreciation." He closed his thinking eyes and gave out with a proverb: "Thou shalt not plug the th.oot of the grunch that hunteth grinnish for thy soup tureen."

That satisfied me, pretty well. I don't suppose I'd have been too bothered even if I'd gone on feeling we were cheating—our saucer was just

too much of a sweetheart. Transparent to the point of invisibility and with tentacle-tip controls, it held the five of us neatly—with room for a couple of extra passengers if we felt so inclined.

In it we could go anywhere we wanted on Earth, hover indefinitely over points of special interest, even land briefly at lonely spots—if we took the proper precautions.

You can bet we always took them! —Dad had every one of us kids, Shorty in particular, memorize *the entire tourists' rule book*.

And once each orbit, without fail, we docked the saucer at Center, cleaned and polished it and rubbed it down with air-wax to maintain its invisibility. Dad was a perfect stickler.

Sometimes I think Dad is almost too saintly a custodian. (But then his worldly side will emerge to confute me.)

Earth was as exciting as a basketful of baby grunch, of course. We first surveyed it all from about one-half tentacle of radius, then began to make closer approaches. We would observe Earthan tests of nuclear weapons—the bulletin board back at Center kept us pretty well posted on the when and where of things like that. The police, you see, kept up systematic study of Earth, though by now the Mind Watchers had turned their extrasensory eyes on newer and (to them) more interesting orbs.

Once Dad dipped down into the soupier atmosphere and steered real close to a big clumsy Earthan airship. It was quite a sight with its rigid fins and hot squirts. They hadn't the faintest suspicion of our presence of course, though Dad followed it closely for some time.

And once another saucer came within an ace of getting itself speared by an experimental Earthan rocket. There were a bunch of saucers hovering around to see the shoot and this one went way inside the bounds our police had set up. There was quite a

fuss and even talk of restricting all saucers, but in the end nothing was done—even the rule-breakers weren't disciplined.

I felt pretty embarrassed. The offending saucer had been manned by heptapussies and that seemed to reflect on us. I got to be as big a stickler as Dad. Once I spanked Shorty for using a flashlight two diameters away from Earth. It couldn't possibly have been seen by Earthans, but it was the principle of the thing.

There were a lot of heptapussies among the tourists, the Tour Boss himself was one and so were most of the police—in fact, we formed a plurality. That's the way galactic touring is apt to go, Dad says—one person decides to make a certain trip and pretty soon fifty of his neighbors get the same idea. One reason Vrup and he had picked Earth was that there were a lot of heptapussies already visiting it. All of them had their personal flying saucers, incidentally, even the solo travelers. The saucers were military surplus, I discovered, and the Tour Boss passed them out like free seaweed. I remembered my worries about special privilege and felt pretty sour.

But there wasn't a single Antarean multibrach among the tourists or officials, which was a relief though we made a point of not commenting.

The Earthan natives themselves gave me the creeps, I have to admit, when we got through our student period and were privileged to hover real low and make landings. There is something just plain sickening about appendages that look like tentacles but turn out to be rigid except for a couple of joints—it makes one think of paralysis and calcification, a sort of living death. These Earthans looked like arthritic heptapussies with only four tentacles, the other three either cropped off (ugh!) or twined in a permanent tight knot at the tops of their bodies (double ugh!).

When Sis first discovered that the

Earthans had bones inside their tentacles she actually took sick!

But Education dispells all hostilities (except toward Antareans—I'll have to spring that point on Dad some day). The more I observed and studied Earthans, the more I got to sympathize with them and the less their unfortunate forms disturbed my appetite. There were a lot of background capsules on Earthan culture available at Center, with new bulletins being added every day. What's more, Dad made each of us learn a different Earthan language. For one and a half tentacles of the time (that's three fourteenths—figure it out for yourself) each of us kids had to do textbook drill or monitor Earthan broadcasts in the appropriate language on our personal radios.

Together with our vacation classwork (Dad had meant it about my tensor calculus!) and the saucer-waxing and all, we weren't left with exactly a plethora of spare time, yet somehow we all thrived and managed to be happier than I ever remember. Even Mom enjoyed herself thoroughly. She got green as a girl and joined in so many of our activities that Dad had to remind her not to neglect her introspection. (Where would any family be if its deep mind quit working?)

All the other tourists seemed to be enjoying themselves equally. There is something terrifically stimulating and enriching, you see, about watching and listening in on the first gropings of an infant racial intelligence and seeing whether it will decide to love, mostly, and live or hate, mostly, and die. It reunites you with the mainsprings of life and you have the privilege of reaffirming your own race's decision—or so the thought capsules think.

These Earthans were in a pretty perilous fix, all right. They were divided into two large federations of semi-industrialized nations, one of them believing that people should be

controlled by appealing to their appetites and the other to their fears. (Dad says I am oversimplifying.) Each federation had fission and fusion weapons and was putting up unmanned and a few manned satellites. And they were both experimenting with underground nuclear explosions—shallow ones so far, fortunately.

The Earthans were fiercely competitive, you soon saw that, and pretty strong haters, but they were warm-hearted and loving critters, too. It made me sort of shiver to think that in a few more orbits, if they took the wrong turning, they and their lovely little planet would be just a smoky red cinder. Each time Dad dove our saucer down through the silky white clouds I filled up with determination to drink in every last infinitely precious detail. (I never ran across any green weavers, however, though I always kept expecting them.)

I got to feeling pretty gooey about the Earthans in spite of the bones in their tentacles and several times I caught myself wishing, especially after I'd mastered a language or two, that I could reveal myself to them and explain that there was no need to perish, that all around them was a strong brotherhood aching to receive them. I rather fancied myself in the role of boy savior, though the Earthans might have found my seven green tentacles rather wild. (I'd thought of a way around that, though.)

For a couple of orbits my gloomy feelings nearly got me down, and, just as if I were a little kid again, I found myself spending a lot of time twisting and shaping my tentacles into fantastic forms. (we are all pretty good at that sort of thing—Dad can do wonderful animal faces.) Then I took stock and whipped myself back into good humor.

About this time I started to pal around quite a bit with a young heptapus named Tab. He was quite a deep-minded logician, even more sym-

pathetic than I towards the Earthans, and inclined to be quietly contemptuous of Mind Watchers and police, though he knew the rule book as well as I did (I tested him). Tab's parents were very intellectual too; they pulled a lot of weight at the group-fests at Center and at times (I blush to admit it) they seemed to me a shade more stylish than Dad and Mom.

When I first met Tab I thought here was my chance to start a Young Rangers patrol, but then I decided he was too intellectual for that sort of thing.

Tab had a lot of sharp ideas that were very suitable for chewing over and a lot of interesting if doubtful information—such as that the more progressive Mind Watchers had worked out nondestructive methods for maturing infant races, but that the conservative majority had blocked their employment.

A couple of times I went for a ride in Tab's family's saucer. It was pretty aesthetic the way they appreciated Earth—there was none of the wise-cracking that Dad and us kids (and even Mom) would have been doing. Tab's father had a way of steering towards things that made them more beautiful. They took me to several of their favorite spots on Earth, especially a wooded mountain with a big dome on it housing some sort of telescope, I believe. We landed there and got out to stretch our tentacles—not by the dome, though, but in a little glade down the mountain side. It was one of their "secret places." Tab's mother explained—none of the other tourists had discovered it yet, she said, and she asked me not to tell. I didn't see anything very wonderful about it, I must admit, though it was nice enough. We rested there for some time, idly spying on an Earthan who came out of a little house and sniffed around for a while as if he sensed something out of the ordinary. In fact he muttered something about

"hearing things" in the argot of the area, which happened to be the one I knew (American, it's called) and even spread his arms wide (he was a solemn chap) and intoned: "Oh spirits, if you have come, speak!" At that moment I caught Tab's father giving Tab a sharp negate, though I hadn't caught what Tab's question or suggestion had been. (This only stuck in my memory because both Tab's father and Tab froze when they realized I might be listening.) Very soon after we took off again.

And once Tab went for a ride in our saucer. He was very polite but he hardly said a word, although Dad tried to draw him out, and I got the impression that he disapproved, in a kindly fashion, of the way my family did things. After that our friendship chilled considerably.

Eventually I told Dad something of my private sympathies for the maybedoomed Earthans and even about my guilty dreams of helping them.

Dad just looked at me very seriously and said, "Now you understand, Son, why the rule book is so danged persnickety. Always remember, Son, that for all his mighty civilization the heptapus is the most lawless animal in the whole universe—fierce, reckless and bloody. Compared to him, the yorfis is a grinni. Civilized—my sixth eye! He needs rules, plenty of them!"

Privately I thought Dad was being romantic, describing us heptapussies that way. Still, I'll admit it made me suck in my tentacles a bit with a sort of embarrassed pride.

Me—seven-branch killer! Hah!

Not three orbits later I'd changed my mind about Dad—he was a complete realist on heptapussies, I decided, at least when it came to the lawless part.

It wasn't any one big thing that made me change my mind, it was that a lot of little incidents had multiplied to the point where they couldn't be ignored or euphemized any more, by me or anyone else.

It amounted to this: *most of the tourists, but the heptapussies in particular, were getting so careless about the way they handled their personal vehicles that Earthans were becoming aware that there were alien spacecraft in their skies.*

We'd noticed instances before—I've mentioned one or two of them—but thought them exceptions. Now it was clear that the exception was becoming the rule and the rule book a dead letter.

Tourists were letting their saucers become positively opaque—I honestly believe some of them hadn't been airwaxed since the Tour Boss assigned them.

Other saucers were airwaxed so sloppily—the goo just thrown on—that there were conspicuous high-lights.

Routine precautions against creating vapor trails were just plain neglected.

Pilots of such slop-saucers (as Dad called them) seemed to make a special point of hovering over Earthan towns, stunting over cities, buzzing known atomic installations, playing "chicken" with Earthan aircraft and tag with each other, and the like.

Some dumped garbage, if you can believe it. Dad said the behavior of some tourists is beyond belief. It takes great faith.

Saucers skimming low through Earth's cone of night followed Earthan roads, deliberately flashed lights at Earthan landcraft, let themselves be silhouetted against the Moon, and I don't know what else. Slop-saucers joined together to cut these didoes in formation, in groups of five and seven!

As for the things we heard about the high jinks engaged in by tourists landed from saucers, sometimes in populous areas—well, they were just plain incredible.

But I remembered what Dad had said about "great faith," I knotted my thinking tentacles and managed

to credit.

What was happening added up to an outbreak of mass mischief, kindergarten level, among the majority of the tourists—a disgusting enough outbreak to turn even a juvenile delinquent (as Dad often describes me) into a confirmed lawman.

Even back at Reception Center the atmosphere of giggly hysteria was so thick you could have used it to curdle interstellar space into an edible sickly sweet jelly. Supposedly hypermature tourists, including a majority of the heptapussies, acted just plain silly drunk.

Here and there were a few families who abstained from dementia, notably Tab's. Our friendship warmed up again.

Even Sis caught the bug, went for a ride in a girlfriend's saucer, and came back hee-hee-heeing about how they'd got some Earthan aircraft following them in circles and flashing lights back at them.

I don't think it does to describe spankings. They ought to be kept a family secret, especially when a girl is involved. I'll only say I didn't know Mom had it in her.

Really, all this nonsense had been warming up for a long time, probably antedating our own arrival at Center, but we'd tried not to believe it. Now we could no longer keep our thinking eyes closed.

What's more: *the Tour Boss and the police weren't doing anything about it.* Not anything with teeth in it, that is, not anything really calculated to *stop the idiots.*

Oh, they engaged in considerable wrist-slapping, but so gentle it wouldn't have stung a baby's tentacle tip. They issued a lot of "reminders" and "warnings"—they even Centerized a couple of saucers. (This last looked like business, but it turned out that the main drives of the two offending saucers had broken down and they'd been *barely snatched out of the hands of the Earthan police be-*

fore being towed back to Center for repairs.)

I'd typed the Tour Boss as a but-terer-up and backslapper from the start. Now he seemed so moon-facedly in love with his reputation for good nature and helpfulness that he didn't dare chance offending one delirious custard head.

As for the police, they acted like tourists wearing badges. End of character estimate.

Don't get me wrong—it was all quite funny of course. I especially derived a sickly sort of amusement from the "reminders" and "warnings" that were forever going up on the bulletin board. For one thing, they threw considerable light on the Earthan hysteria.

Seems that Earthan beings were madly squabbling among themselves as to whether or not the saucers were real or just a silly-season phenomenon. (Small wonder that no Earthans seemed able to deduce that the saucers were both real and silly.) Factions and cults were formed, for and against saucers. Some even worshipped us, it was reported. Earthan enthusiasts climbed mountains and stayed up nights to watch for saucers, then spread the word like maniacs. Saucer hysteria would break out now here, now there, as our lovable little slop-saucer irresponsibles shifted their antics from one area to another. I panicked myself imagining how Earth ought soon to start rocking like a boat from Earthan saucer-bugs rushing back and forth from one side of the planet to the other.

But the next tentacle to self-panicking is self-disgust. One orbit even a joker like me wakes up to the realization that there isn't anything one bit funny about super-beings behaving like tots kootchy-kootchy ticled into prankish delirium or about dawn creatures (I mean the Earthans) being goosed into hysteria in the midst of a somber and crucial struggle between their own strong loves

and hates and while trying to make a for-all-times decision between life and death.

Not one bit funny at all.

We tourists were tampering with a bud planet. A few more orbits of such prankishness and Earth's potential for growth and free choice would be irremediably warped.

Once that thought was expressed in our family (I think it was Mom who put it into symbols) we went into action. At least Dad did. (Dad always says, "Son, if your thinking tentacles stop manipulating real objects it doesn't matter what beautiful thoughts they curl around.")

Dad set us kids to double-waxing our saucer, which we first wafted into an area of Center reserved for group-fests, and then he went out to organize a protest committee.

He reported back a weary time later and said he'd got a fair response. Tab's family had been the first to join with him and they'd been very eager about it, which bucked him up considerably and made him think, he said, that we actually might be able to do something by sweet reason alone.

Just the same I noticed him slip a package wrapped in nothingness fabric aboard our fanatically airwaxed saucer (which takes sharp eyes if I do say myself!) I quizzed him and he drew me in close and unwrapped it enough to show me two paralysis pistols. How he'd laid his squeezers on those I can't imagine. (Later I found he'd got the Armorer's girlfriend and then the Armorer drunk. To get the liquor in the first place, he'd had to square the Cellarer, how I never did discover. You know, I think Dad would do very well on a pirate planet.)

"Son," he said, "I'm showing you these because if we have to use them I want your squeezer around one. Strictly felonious, of course, and could get you five hundred orbits in a frost cell of Blackgarth."

I had to squeeze my eyes hard, all five of them.

I went to the groupfab Dad and Tad's father had called feeling as if I were muscled like a sea-yorfis and with a spiked iron club in each tentacle. Our family—our two-man family—would show these slop-saucerites something!

I came out of it feeling like a sick grinni.

Tab's father had sabotaged our whole effort!—and for the moment neither Dad nor I could figure out why; we were just stunned.

Dad had made a blistering introductory statement and then called on his supposed chief supporter. That caused a big flurry of excitement because Tab's father had come to be the chief speaker at most groupfabs, a heptapus everyone looked up to. He wafted himself to the rostrum, wrapped a couple of tentacles around the frame, and began a long rigmarole about how he supported Dad because of the principle of the thing although there was no practical need to worry about Earthans catching on to the presence of the tourists. Somehow he'd got hold of a Mind Watcher file on Earth and now he quoted it to show that Earthans were forever believing they were seeing strange objects in their skies. Thousands of earth orbits ago Earthans had been seeing fiery chariots streaking around overhead; that they should think they were seeing similar things now was just normal Earthan behavior and had nothing or almost nothing to do with our saucers! Earthan history proved that such epidemics of mass hysteria recurred at regular intervals. Still, he affirmed, he supported Dad *for aesthetic reasons!* Tourists ought always to behave beautifully for beauty's own sake, and now that everyone had been reminded of it he was sure that they would! The most important thing, he said, was for us not to fight among ourselves: tourist dissensions could harm dawn folk—

and he quoted instances.

Boy, that was just the opening the Tour Boss was waiting for! With sickening joviality he promised to send everyone daily reminders to behave beautifully and then he went on to thank Tab's father for presenting the matter so smoothly and intelligently—and by implication to castigate Dad for being an uncivilized alarmist. When he finished you'd have thought Dad had tried to start a riot and Tab's father had saved the day for decorum.

I expected Dad to make a fight of it, but for once he failed me. He just looked around, a bit grimly perhaps, and wafted out of the fab without comment.

Tab's father called gayly to Tab and the rest of his family to join him right away at their saucer, that he had a little expedition in mind—a beautiful piece of good-example-setting, I thought bitterly.

I slunk out after Dad, feeling like a sick grinni to be sure, but eager to talk about the why of Tab's father's double cross.

It turned out Dad had something else on his mind, something trivial. I got real irked at him.

"Later on, son," he said. "I just remembered it's Vrup's birthday."

Dad always remembers birthdays.

The Interstellar Sender was pretty suspicious of Dad's request—probably he'd had a warning that Dad might try to go over the Tour Boss's head—but when he found Dad merely wanted to send Interstellar Greeting 3 he simmered down and got condescendingly friendly.

All he'd have to do would be to send Vrup's planet address and a 3 and Vrup would get a message gold-embossed and a yard long with magenta fringe beginning with "May the stars show forth the secrets of the All-Father and the whole planet know on this your natal day," or some folderol like that.

It wasn't at all like Dad to use

standardized messages. He must be slipping, it flashed through my mind, after the big slap he got at the fab—and instantly gave myself a big mental slap for having the thought.

Still his business with the Sender gave me time to straighten out my ideas.

"Dad," I said, tight-beaming it, as soon as he was free, "Tab's father is just too all-fired smart to believe what he said about slop-saucers *not* being responsible for Earthan saucer hysteria. He's a custard head, all right, but it's thinking custard."

"I agree, Son." Very quiet, very tight.

"So he must have another reason for not wanting sightseeing curtailed in any way. Dad, I think he *wants* the Earthans to know about us. In fact, he *must* want just that. He *must* want Earthans to know about the Galactic Union before they're adjudged to have made their free choice for life or death."

"Go on, Son."

"Well, if he *wants* something so contrary to tradition the chances are that he's *actively working* for it as well—that he's already set up or setting up contact with the Earthans."

"I triple check you, Son. Those thoughts are mine. He must be in or entering contact. But can you pin it down any further?"

"Dad, I think I can," I beamed eagerly and went on to tell about my last ride in Tab's family saucer.

"Round up Sis and Shorty, Son," Dad said as soon as I'd finished, and he was light-heartedly loose-beaming now. "I'll get Mom. I think it would be nice if we all went on a picnic—" (he tightened his beam again)—"at a certain secret glade."

I don't ever remember Earth's cloud flocks looking as soft and dazzlingly white. Maybe we didn't make our approach "beautifully" but we threaded through them without disturbing a wisp of vapor or adding or subtracting one iota of shimmer—as any well-

piloted saucer should.

We spotted the wooded mountain with the big dome on it. Dad withdrew his tentacles from the controls.

"Take over, Son," he said.

This time I didn't feel any extra muscles or spiked clubs, I just felt like a grown-up heptapus with a job to do. I took us on a smooth curve to the secret glade—there was something going on there, all right!—and I brought us down, not in the glade, but in a narrow gap between two nearby trees, without jogging one lightly poised dried leaf. Grass leaned lazily away from the saucer as I landed—that was all.

Next thing Dad and I were out and advancing and there was something reassuringly solid (and responsible-making) in one of my free squeezers. We didn't send one crumb of sound or thought ahead of us, not even when we peered into the glade.

The Earthan I'd seen there before was kneeling on the far side of the glade, looking exalted. I might have guessed from that that he was a primitive esper and receiving, but I didn't need to—all around us, loose beamed, were spraying the Great Thoughts, the Secrets of the Galactic Union.

They were coming from Tab's father, who was on the near side of the glade with his family artistically grouped around him. Translucent green against the green forest, he was standing lightly on two tentacles and waving the other five in rhythmic hypnotic passes—very beautifully. The stinking custard-head was giving way to his sloppy desires to share and save!—and a little mystery that had nagged my mind for many orbits was solved.

"Green weaver," I tight-beamed Dad; "and lambent as Old Scratch."

"Right, Son," Dad responded. "Take him, son, at median power. I'll take his brood."

Our paralysis pistols sighed as one. Tab's father, I am pleased to say,

froze in a particularly graceful attitude. The Great Thoughts seemed to hang motionless in the air a moment, then fall like autumn leaves.

On the other side of the glade the Earthan slowly got to his feet. I could see and sense that he was still exalted, though beginning to be a little puzzled now.

There flashed into my mind the terrific problem still facing us. The Great Thoughts had been loosed in this bud planet, Tab's father had seen to that. By all the laws of psycho-dynamics they would spread and fill this planet, driving out all lesser thoughts, conquering all errors, until all Earthans would know about the Galactic Union and their race's situation *before making their free choice*.

Of course we could kill or kidnap this particular Earthan, or wipe his mind. Such an act would in itself be a tremendous violation of tradition. Still, we could do it—Dad had proven himself a lawless pistol-packer and I was his son.

But how could we be sure that would take care of things? The Great Thoughts had been loosed. Tab's father could have made revelations to this Earthan which he might already have passed to other Earthans.

What could we do to nullify those possibilities? How do you rope a runaway thought? I'd always been taught that it is in the nature of the Great Thoughts that they drive out lesser thoughts. What psycho-dynamic pattern (if any!) could we send out after the runaway Great Thoughts that would render them ineffectual?

As I say, all this shot into my mind in an instant. I turned toward Dad, meaning to beam a question. He was stepping confidently into the glade.

I have mentioned that Dad was very good at doing pseudo shapes with his tentacles, at imitating other forms with them simply by superb muscular control. Now two of his walking tentacles had become green legs—just like those of an Earthan

though shorter and stockier than most. The tentacle tips turned up like the toes of fabulous green slippers.

His other walking tentacle and one of his handling tentacles had become stubby green arms, which looked as if they ended in little mittened hands.

His body was deep purple—I realized he must be using self-suggestion to induce our typical resentment reaction.

But the three top tentacles (one handling, two "thinking"—really, fine-handling) were his masterpiece. They were intricately yet smoothly knotted together into a large grotesque Earthan head that was mostly face. Two bold tentacle curves made a great ridged brow over cavernous eye sockets, others formed cheeks and chin. A partly contracted tentacle end made a large beaky nose. His eyes figured as buttons down his waist.

Dad had become a brawny little green man in a purple jacket.

The eyes of the Earthan on the other side of the glade grew wide. He took a staggering backward step. "Good God, no!" he cried.

The Green Dwarf—I mean Dad—raised an arm. A slit opened in his lower face.

"Afraid be not," Dad croaked—in American too, of course. "I waft in peace and love to untangle all hard-knotted confusions." He stood stock still and pointed at Tab's father, whose paralyzed form at this moment overbalanced and fell with a gentle *swush* in a pile of dried leaves.

"Him Martian, *Bad*," Dad croaked. He turned a green mitt toward his own purple middle. "Me Venusian. *Good*. I tell all. We go for a ride in my saucer—no?" He turned slowly toward me, giving me plenty of time to get ready, and extended a commanding mitt.

"Fetch same," he ordered me.

My Green Dwarf wasn't nearly as good as Dad's (for one thing my purple jacket kept fading out) but it

didn't have to be—Dad had made the crucial impression and the Earthan couldn't keep his eyes off him. I was a green-blobby reasonable facsimile.

Bowing low, I rapidly backed out of the glade. I wasn't absolutely sure yet what Dad's game was, but I had a good idea. As soon as I got back to our saucer I told everybody to ask no questions but make like Green Dwarfs, though I didn't use that exact expression because I didn't trust their knowledge of Earthan mythology. I told Shorty I'd ram his tentacles down his gullet if he cut up.

Then I wafted us back to the glade. I had to tip the saucer at an eighty degree angle to squeeze between some of the trees, but I managed.

Dad had obviously been making the most of his time. He was calling the Earthan Mister Adamovich now and the Earthan was calling him Dear Guru. They seemed like real buddies. Dad was saying, "Ah yes, that was when we built the caves under your cities which the evil ones still occupy, warping your minds with cunning rays. You need much Venus-thought to fight that. Much!"

Mister Adamovich got another shock when he saw the four of us gliding into the glade on a heat shimmer, but he got over it fast. In fact he showed himself a pretty brave man, because not long afterwards we were hoisting him aboard and strapping him down for the little spin Dad had promised. I think he almost lost his nerve as the invisible band tightened around his middle. Dad said something soothing.

It was of course just about the dull-est ride imaginable, as this Earthan didn't seem able to take anything but the mildest accelerations and I surely didn't want him to pop anything inside his half-calcified carcass. It was a proud moment for me that Dad let me do the piloting. I took her up between the trees as gently as if I were transporting seven maiden aunts with lace-coral tiaras and then I put

her through her paces at funeral tempo—I swear I didn't use more than 4 G's at any time.

But to see the way this Mister Adamovich kept changing color and closing his eyes and gulping and leaning this way and that and clutching first at the side-bar and then at Dad, you'd have thought we were the Special Number in some all-galactic space-o-batics show.

Between turns and jumps and drops Dad kept filling Mister Adamovich full of more stuff on us Venusians: how we'd come from Atlantis and Mu originally (here Dad's earthan mythology began to get ahead of me, but I made him repeat it to me later) and about the Wars of the Evil Tyrants and the Great Interplanetary Migrations, and the Martian Conflict and the Giant Love-Girls, whoever they were.

Among other things Dad told Mister Adamovich that any number of Earthan beings were or had really been Venusians in disguise (or Martians sometimes): Plato, Aristotle, Cleopatra, The Black Prince, Roger Bacon, Cagliostro, Madame Blavatsky, Einstein, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Greta Garbo, Peter Lorre, Bela Lugosi, Edward Teller, Gerald Heard, Richard Shaver, Hugo Gernsback, Marilyn Monroe, and I doubt if even Dad can remember all the names he gave out with.

I suppose it must have been quite an experience to Mister Adamovich dodging around through the clouds (at a snail's-pace, really) with us five maniacs in a ship he could only feel and being pumped full of all this information at the same time.

Of course by now I realized exactly what Dad was doing and I was filled with the intensest admiration. No matter what or how much Tab's father had espied to this Earthan, it couldn't compete with this stuff that was being sewed into his soul along with the gentle joy-ride. His experience with Tab's father must have

seemed to some degree dreamlike.

Oh yes, Mister Adamovich was convinced all right. To his dying day he'd believe every word Dad had told him and do his best to get other Earthans to believe them—maybe along with the Great Thoughts, maybe without.

But only Mister Adamovich would have had Mister Adamovich's experience. Not another halfway intelligent Earthan would credit for a moment the nonsense Dad had filled him up with—and insofar as they discredited his nonsense they'd discredit the Great Thoughts too. Earth would still be able to make her free choice between life and death, secure from any knowledge of the Galactic Union.

Later on Dad summed it up for me this way: "Son, the Great Thoughts can drive out any lesser thoughts—but not pure hokum."

As soon as I brought her down Dad hustled Mister Adamovich out of the saucer and out of the glade too, fast—on the grounds that we mustn't take any chances with more spying Martians or cave folk or Giant Love-Girls or any other of the mythological rabble. As they left I heard Dad starting to repeat for good measure all the stuff he'd told Mister Adamovich in the sky.

I knew what to do without Dad's high-sign. I located Tab's family saucer and we piled them all in it, still happily paralyzed, and strapped them down. When Dad got back (the Earthan's house hadn't been far) he and I piloted the two saucers back to Center without any mishaps.

I expected we'd run into all sorts of a ruckus there—in fact I was thinking that at least I'd have a good yarn to tell the other convicts on Blackgarth—but it turned out that Dad had taken care of everything there too. As I would have guessed if I hadn't been so irked at the time, his birthday greeting to Vrup had been a tip-off. It hadn't been Vrup's birthday at all and as soon as Vrup had read that

stuff about the stars showing forth secrets to the whole planet he'd tumbled to what Dad was trying to tell him and had alerted the Mind Watchers and the Galactic Coordinators fast and they'd jumped on the Tour Boss and the circum-Terran police—instantaneously!

They made an example of the planet. A tight censorship was thrown around Earth and every last tourist was cleaned out of the Solar System—the Tour Boss and police too needless to say, though I never have found out if they ended up on Blackgarth.

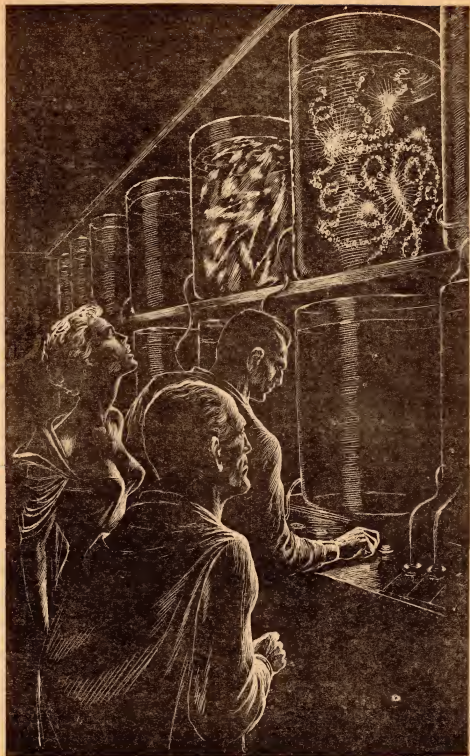
The Tourists included Dad and me and the rest of the family, of course, so our saucer vacation was cut short. But it had certainly been exciting while it lasted.

I told Dad, we ought to be privileged to stay on because he'd so beautifully solved the problem of keeping the Earthans in the dark, but he told me to shut up about that. "Doesn't do to whip your own gong, Son," he said, "and the experts always take a dim view of the homely methods of the grunch-doctor."

Because of the unexpected load on galactic travel facilities we had to translate back in two jumps—with the stopover at Antares Three, if you please. We spent a goosey two sleep-times there, expecting every minute to be lynched.

One of the things I remember saying to Dad while we were all talking fast to keep up our courage was: "Hey, with all this censorship we'll probably never find out what happens to Earth. Do you think they'll explode themselves, Dad?"

He shrugged his tentacles. "Son," he said, "it's a race's privilege to die if it wants to. What the Earthans do with the Earth is their problem." There was a little crackling sound like a multibrach sneaking up and Dad shot a quick look in all directions. Then he told me, "You worry about what happens to heptapussies."



by JOHN BRUNNER

curative **TELEPATH**

BECAUSE he was who he was, he asked for—and they gave him—a private aircraft to take him anywhere in the world, to avoid the curious stares and whispers of other people. But because he was what he was even the faint surprise which showed in the eyes of the aircraft's pilot when they first met hurt, and hurt badly. He bore with it for a little; then he made use of the aircraft less and less.

Because he was as he was, he liked either to be alone (and generally they would not allow him to be alone—he was too valuable) or here at the curative centre in Ulan Bator, where those who knew who he was no longer felt more than a stir of pity at his appearance and those who did not know assumed him to be a patient like themselves.

He was—what? A dwarf; a cripple; Gerald Howson, Psi.D., 'curative telepath first class, World Health Organisation. He was one of the hundred most important men in the world.

He remembered sometimes the feeling of expectation he had had when they first discovered his talent. The gift was rare, but so important that virtually everyone on earth was given tests for it. They had found him at the age of twenty-two; he had actually been telling stories to a deaf-and-dumb girl when they caught up with him. In the stories, she was always very beautiful, instead of coarse-boned and heavy-faced; he himself was usually some cross between Tarzan and Robin Hood.

She had cried when they explained they were going to take her friend away; and he, when he understood what sort of future lay before him, had insisted that they take her along as well and see what they could do to cure her. (It was that insistence, so Pandit Singh was later to tell him, which assured the people who took him in hand that he would become not an industrial disputes arbitrator, not a peacemaker, nor any of the other me-

tiers open to projective telepathists, but a healer of sick minds.)

He had of course assumed that now he was so important they would cure him, too: add a couple of cubits to his stature as he had been unable to, though he had indeed taken much thought, straighten out his twisted left leg and cleanse his face of its lopsided, slightly idiotic expression.

They gave the girl a trembler coil inside her skull, and she learned to hear; they gave her bio-activated vocal cords of virtually imperishable plastic, so that she stumbled into possession of a musical, though hesitant, speaking voice. For a long time she paid frequent visits to Gerald Howson, and every time thanked him with tears in her eyes. But in the end the visits grew fewer; finally they stopped, and he heard she had married a man from the same city block on which he and she both had been born, and had had children.

Whereas he was a dwarf cripple.

He remembered Pandit Singh explaining with all the kindness in the world just why this would have to be so. He had recounted how it was a miracle in itself that he had lived until he was discovered—a single serious illness or injury would have sent him to his grave. He was a hemophilic—a bleeder—and a cut even on his finger would ooze for a day before it grudgingly began to seal over. (Well, they could give him prothrombin, and indeed now he always carried a phial of it in his pocket in case he did cut himself; but prothrombin was a crutch.) And all his other recuperative and regenerative powers were, for some reason, equally slow, equally halting.

So they could not even give him plastic surgery on his face; they demonstrated what they meant with a skin graft, just to convince him, and long before the slow-growing tissues had knit and bloodvessels had twined into the graft, the transplant had gan-

greed and sloughed off. They could maintain a sort of half-life in the transplant but then the bloodvessels never grew into it at all; it was as if they made up their minds their work was being done for them.

This slowness extended to such things as his body hair. He had a barber attend him perhaps once in three months; he never shaved more often than that, and his chin was scarcely fuzzy when the razor passed across it.

Pandit Singh had made it perfectly clear that without his handicap he would never have become a projective telepathist. The area of his brain which held the body-image for his metabolism to use in blue-printing tissue regeneration had atrophied under pressure from his organ of Funck. And consequently he had a telepathic voice which could be heard for more than a hundred miles when he cared to use it—but he could not grow a beard.

Exactly eleven years ago to the day he had had to resign himself to the fact that he would die in the same twisted body. But in eleven years he had never been reconciled to it. Other people in his profession with comparable talents, didn't suffer from such compensating handicaps.

He was in the ward where they had brought a man called Hugh Choong—in fact, he was standing at the end of Choong's bed, looking down at him. There was a man with powers like his own, but he stood medium tall, and—excepting that he was wasted through having eaten nothing in twenty days—he was physically sound.

The injustice of it weighed heavily on Howson's mind.

Now Choong stirred and opened his eyes. It was as if a gigantic light had been switched on in the room; everything stood out in bright, three-dimensional forms compared to grey dusk. That was Choong's perception waking up. Only another telepathist

would have noticed the difference.

Howson limped around the side of the bed and looked at the patient's face more closely. Yes, there was a resemblance. He remembered—

Who are you? Do I know you?

"Yes, you know me. Gerald Howson. You probably hate me." Deliberately, Howson used words; he was shutting down every batten he could on his blazing mind.

Choong closed and then re-opened his eyes, and moved his arm languidly on the coverlet. "I'm glad to meet you, Dr. Howson," he said. "Did you—uh—handle my case?"

Howson nodded. He said, "Why did you do it?"

"Do what? Oh! Go into fugue, you mean? Why—"

This man, Howson reflected bitterly in a fraction of a second, is a psychiatrist, and a very able one; he is also an industrial disputes arbitrator called on to handle the most complex decisions. Twenty days ago, he assembled a group of people he has barely met; he brings them together on benches in the square facing the hospital, and uses his imagination combined with his telepathic ability to take them from reality into a world of dreams. I—I—I who am cursed with a wish to do exactly that (only for choice, on my own) have to destroy his illusions, trespassing into his mind and creating superior illusions of my own until his fantasies become unbearable. And he comes back, and asks if I handled his case. What sort of a man *is* this, in truth?

"—I felt I needed a holiday," said Choong with a wry smile.

"You what?"

"I needed a holiday. I needed to escape for a little. I made a few inquiries and saw no chance of getting one any other way. I had heard of a few cases of people like us creating a cataleptic group, so I asked half a dozen acquaintances if they liked the idea, and they did, so—so we went ahead."

He managed to push himself into a sitting position; he was obviously recovering fast. "I don't regret it in the slightest. It was a welcome change, and then of course I had the opportunity of seeing one of your people work at—at first hand, so to say."

Howson almost choked before he could reply; when he did, it was with an anger which blazed so fiercely that he used projection instead of words. Essentially, he "said": *How can you be so blatantly selfish? Don't you know how much trouble and worry you've caused? Don't you care about the trouble you put me personally to? How do you think I liked fighting through the ridiculous empty fantasies you created and breaking them down? How do you feel about the time you wasted—time I could have used to help someone who was in real need?*

Choong cried out and put his hand to his head; a nurse came hastening up to demand what the matter was. Choong, recovering, waved her away, but she warned Howson sternly that there must be no repetition of this.

When the nurse had gone, Choong looked wryly at Howson. "You've got some power on you," he said. "Do you mind sticking to speech? I've had a good deal of your shock tactics recently, and my mind feels rather bruised. But to answer you—with a question—why do you feel so guilty about deriving pleasure from your abilities?"

Howson began to deny it; Choong cut him short. "Damn it, Howson, you wouldn't blame a man with physical gifts for enjoying himself at sports. Yet you blame me—and in so doing blame yourself—for taking pleasure in the use of a mental talent. I—oh: Howson. Of course. I identify you now. I can recall quite clearly what you did to bring me out of it. Ingenious! But where was I? Ah. I think you should have that cleared up, you

know, that sense of guilt. It's not logical. I mean, don't you ever use your telepathy for your own enjoyment? For instance, my wife and I usually link up when we go to bed; I dream much more vividly than she does, and I like her to share my dreams. Don't you ever do that sort of thing?"

"I'm not married," said Howson in a voice like steel, and Choong flashed an impolite glance into his mind. When he spoke again, it was with a change of manner.

"I'm sorry. That was tactless. But—"

Howson said unwillingly, "There was once a time when I did. I don't often think about it now." He explained about the deaf-and-dumb girl who had been his companion in the past; he didn't know why he spoke of her to this comparative stranger, except perhaps as compensation for having trespassed in his mind. When he finished, Choong nodded.

"I imagine—if you'll forgive me saying so—you must enjoy your work, at any rate vicariously. It must—uh—be quite a change to be a tough, resilient individual capable of great physical effort."

"I—yes, I do enjoy it. Sometimes, perhaps, I take longer than I need over a curative programme—so that I can escape from my own limitations for a greater length of time."

"Very natural," nodded Choong with a wise expression. "But regrettable. I think—and this is no more than a guess—I think if you allowed yourself to derive more pleasure from your abilities, you'd feel less tempted to use other people's fantasies for the same end."

"How can I?" said Howson bitterly. "Are you suggesting I should do as you've just done—set up a fantasy grouping? How could I tell Pandit Singh that I wanted to run away into the very kind of dreams I spend much of my time bringing other people back from? Although—"

His voice trailed away.

"Yes?" prompted Choong encouragingly.

"Oh, he knows I'm jealous. And yet—well, tell me something. Presumably when you brought your—uh—associates into the square facing the hospital and sent them off into catalepsy, you were expecting to be found, expecting to be brought back from your world of dreams?"

"Of course." Choong smiled slightly. "I didn't much want to starve to death—and I was sure I wouldn't want to come back of my own accord."

"I couldn't do that," said Howson. "For one thing, I couldn't put enough trust in the ability of anyone else to bring me back. After all, I suppose I've demolished more fantasy worlds than any other telepathist alive. And for another thing—if someone else *did* manage to bring me back, it would undermine my confidence in my own ability."

He glanced round and saw that the ward nurse was standing at his side with a threatening expression.

"You wouldn't want to undo your good work by making Mr. Choong exhausted, would you now, Dr. Howson?" she suggested pointedly. "Could I ask you to finish your conversation?"

"All right," Howson consented dispiritedly. He was turning to limp away when Choong spoke up one final time.

"Then it's fairly clear that an escape which suits me or someone else doesn't suit you, Howson. You're a unique individual. Find your own way, then. There's bound to be one."

There's bound to be one. Howson wasn't quite sure whether Choong had physically spoken those last few words, or had eased them telepathically into his mind with the practised skill of a first-class psychiatrist implanting a suggestion in a patient. In

a patient—that was amusing! A few days before Howson had been the doctor, Choong his patient; a moment had seen the roles reversed.

He had already ordered his personal attendant to pack him a bag; now, though, as he hesitated outside Pandit Singh's office, he was beginning to feel doubts. Suppose he didn't find the solution to his problems? Suppose he couldn't even *begin* to think of how to look for a solution? (At the moment, he certainly hadn't begun.)

Then he steeled himself, and pushed open the door. It was not so difficult as some other doors in the hospital for his spindly arms and short reach; he suspected, without being sure, that Pandit Singh had quietly arranged for it to be kept oiled and free-moving so as not to embarrass Howson.

The distinguished-looking Indian at the big desk in the office didn't look up; he said merely, "Hullo, Gerry—come in and sit down, won't you? I shan't be a second."

Once, a long time ago, Howson reflected as he hitched himself up on the slightly-smaller-than-average chair Singh kept specially for him, he had thought that the hospital director must have embryo telepathic faculties himself—he never bothered to look up to identify a visitor. Then he had realised the Indian merely had a superlative auditory memory for footsteps and voices.

Now Singh folded a package of case-reports and docketed them for permanent filing; he set down the pen he had been using and gave Howson a faint smile.

"When did you last take a holiday, Gerry?" he inquired.

"Why—"

"All right, I know perfectly well. You haven't taken a holiday in six years. I do manage to persuade you to rest occasionally, but that's not enough. You used to fly off for a week or two at a time when you first

came here—now you seem to prefer to take advantage of other people's fantasies instead. I think I'm probably a lot to blame, of course; it struck me when you admitted you were jealous of Hugh Choong that I've simply got used to making the most of your talents. Comes a difficult case, I relinquish the responsibility I ought to exercise in a sort of sublime and dreamy confidence in your ability to cure it. It won't do. It simply won't do."

He sat back and crossed his legs, and his smile returned and grew broader.

Feeling oddly on the defensive, Howson said, "Pan, you know that's not a fair way of looking at it. Though I say it myself, there's no one else who could handle some of the cases we get here, and never has been, barring Ilse Kronstadt, and she's dead. Besides, I don't mind—I can't think of a better use to put my time to than curing our patients, and I wouldn't be happy doing anything else."

"Then what's this I hear about you having your bags packed?" demanded Singh, leaning forward as if scoring a winning point. Over Howson's stammered reply, he laughed, and went on, "Oh, don't think I mind, Gerry. It's the best news I've heard in months. Because the plain fact is you *aren't* happy. It's no good trying to maintain that you are. And you don't have to apologise for doing it without warning, either. You'll probably say that it means wasting time which could be put to good use curing someone else. Who cares? A month or two's delay in straightening out a patient in fugue is neither here nor there; after all, there are other people on the staff who can handle the work, even if they aren't up to your standard. But if my prize assistant were to crack up, if you were to dash off into a fantasy world as you threatened to do, *that* would be a disaster."

He waited expectantly for Howson's reply; it came by fits and starts, because Howson had hardly yet had a chance to verbalise his feelings and intentions.

"You're perfectly right, Pan," he said. "I'm not altogether happy. I'm scared, to be frank. I'm scared of what I might give way to. I'm equally scared of going out into the world at large, because it never treated me very kindly. But there's some kind of difference between the two sorts of fear. I couldn't tell whether I was going to crack up or not because the possibility comes from within myself. But I feel I have at least some chance of standing up to the world now. I've got to. What it'll prove to me, I just can't guess. All I do know is that unless I do *something* I may one day go into some patient's fantasy world and find it so much to my liking that I may never want to come back. I couldn't—I don't think—escape into a fantasy world of my own. But I might like someone else's fantasies equally well."

Pandit Singh picked up a pen from the desk top and tapped with it on the silent surface of a note-block. "I wish sometimes, Gerry, that I could have as clear an insight into the minds of my staff, particularly of you curative telepathists, as I can obtain into the minds of the patients. It always strikes me that you, all of you and you in particular, are walking a tight-rope over a volcano in eruption. At any moment, you may slip, or a piece of red-hot scoria may burn the rope through."

"Picturesque; but too fancy," said Howson dryly. "It isn't a volcano—it's a plain old-fashioned hell, with devils complete."

He briskened slightly. "Well, what I mainly came in here to tell you, Pan, aside from the bare fact of my going, was that I want to go absolutely alone."

Singh looked startled. "But—"

"I think one of the reasons I lost interest in making the trips I used to do when I first came here was that I couldn't get away. Someone followed me everywhere, in case I stumbled, in case vicious children made mock of me, in case I found myself in trouble of some sort. What the hell good is that to me? Maybe I can't go rock-climbing in the Caucasus; maybe I can't go surf-riding at Bondi Beach. But damn it, I looked after myself on a tough city block for twenty-two years even before I knew what kind of powers I had. It might do me more good than anything else if I could re-learn how to do that."

Pandit Singh hesitated for a long time. Unwillingly, he nodded. "I suppose you're right, Gerry. I can't judge you. You're obviously not going to do anything so stupid as to chuck your prothrombin in the waste-bucket, I presume—independence has limits."

"I wouldn't do that. It would be like a—a diabetic throwing away his insulin. But dependence has limits, too, you know."

"Uh-huh. Well, what precisely do you propose to do?"

"I shall send for a cab, and go to the airport. I shall take a plane and go somewhere. I don't know where. And I'll come back in six months or a year. You'll see I have money?"

"Naturally."

"Well, then," said Howson, oddly at a loss, "that seems to be all, doesn't it?"

"It does rather." Pandit Singh got up and came round the desk; he held out his hand as Howson slid down from his chair and did the same. "Good luck, Gerry—I think you know best what you want."

Howson was on the point of leaving the room when Singh raised his voice after him. "Gerry!"

"Yes?"

"You—uh—you don't like attracting attention, I know. It occurs to me—well, I don't know, but I should

have thought it was possible for someone with your ability to give the impression of being—or rather of looking different—I don't know..."

He let his voice tail away as he found himself momentarily looking at an olive-skinned man with a square beard, standing almost two metres in height; he wore a peculiar barbarian costume mostly of leather studded with tarnished brass, and a huge sword dangled from his belt. He was muscular and good-looking in a tough way.

The stranger changed; melted; shrank until he was four feet three and beardless and slightly deformed—until, in fact, he was Gerald Howson.

"What would be the good?" said Howson quietly, and went out of the room.

He didn't know until he was actually at the airport where he was going; in fact, his voice seemed to come of its own accord when he asked for a ticket to the city which had been his home.

Home. He never thought of it like that now. "Home" had for so long meant his private apartment in the great hospital at Ulan Bator, from which he could look out over the high white towers of the capital of Asia. It was more of a home than anywhere else had ever been. The furniture, from the tables, chairs and beds to the sanitary fittings in the adjacent bathroom, was tailored to him; even the deep armchair where he sat often till four and five in the morning, reading, was cunningly designed to favour and cherish his twisted left leg. It was *his*, all of it—none of it was borrowed, or discarded by others. The normal-sized chair he kept for his rare visitors seemed like an intruder.

And yet for the first twenty-two years of his life he had known no other world than a certain rather shabby district of one particular city. He had

known of another world—he learned about it from the cinema, from the rare occasions when someone who had an apartment with a TV set let him creep in and squat on the floor, and of course from books and magazines. But this world, which was enormous, seemed to be inhabited entirely by handsome men and beautiful women. Naturally, he dreamed.

The rat-hole which was his home wasn't all that much worse than most of the rooms in the area, but it was worse, or else he could never have kept it for himself. His living, such as it was, he had scraped from odd jobs and the carrying of messages; everyone in the district knew him, knew he was intelligent enough to be trusted with the most complicated—but non-physical—tasks, knew he was weak enough to be cowed into discretion over the most private messages. He asked for payment in food and drink as often as not; what money he accepted he spent on escape into the great world. Via the screen, large and small, and via his "library" of novels, travel books and picture magazines.

But they had probably forgotten him by now. He hadn't changed much, but he was well-dressed instead of shabby, well-fed instead of pinched and scrawny—enough change to make people glance at him and pucker their foreheads as if in search of a half-vanished memory.

In a way, he found this comforting. Most places he had been, he had been a major curiosity, a freak; here, though, he was not so much out of place. There was poverty here, and many people were sick or deformed a little; he was deformed a little more than a little, but that was less conspicuous here than it would have been at Brasilia or Port Elizabeth or Kandy. (He had been there, too; he had not enjoyed his stay.)

He had left his bags at the airport, bringing with him only a light hand-case which he could easily manage.

He had taken a cab as far as the outskirts of the district, but as soon as he came to the familiar streets he paid off the driver and started to walk. He managed to put the driver's air of astonishment and pity out of his mind as soon as he was on the territory he remembered.

There had been some changes, of course, in the intervening years. The first one which really impinged on him, though, was the fact that his old home had gone.

He stood on a street-corner and looked at the towering stack of low-priced apartments which had taken the place of the plaster-peeling rabbit warren of a tenement he knew. The same kind of street gangs chased past him; the same kind of elderly wheezing cars rolled by, the same kind of crowded buses clanged and burped down the street. But the place where he had eked out his teen-age days was gone.

Oddly disappointed, though he had never thought he might actually want to see that dirty room again, he moved on. As he went, he found people glancing at him; a small boy bravely threw a dirty word at him and dissolved into laughter. He tried to make his vacant face a little more purposeful, and confined himself to that instead of throwing an illusion into the child's mind.

A block or two north, he remembered, there had been a bar and grill, where the proprietor had often fed him for helping out in the kitchen on a Saturday night. He was hungry after his journey; he made for the place.

It had changed in detail, not in layout; there was an air of mild prosperity about the new fittings. He knew he would never be able to hitch himself on to a stool at the counter, so he went to a table instead, although this earned him a grimace from the lounging counterhand. "What'll it be?" the young man called.

"Small portion of steak and French fries, and a can of beer," said Howson. There was no one else in the place at the moment, so his voice carried well enough; usually it had insufficient power to cut through the hubbub of a crowd.

The food appeared; the counterhand brought it and the beer over and set it down on the table. "Here y'are, shorty," he said in a friendly enough manner. "Hey—I think I seen you aroun' here before. Did I?"

Thirteen years ago, he would have been about twelve, maybe—old enough to have seen me and possibly remembered. Howson rolled his beer from can to glass. "You might have," he said cautiously. "Does Charlie Birberger still run this place?"

"Uh-huh. You a friend of his?"

"Yes, I used to be. I wonder—if he's in, maybe he'd come out and have a word with me?"

"I'll ask," said the counterhand obligingly, and went back behind his counter.

There was an exchange of shouts; then Charlie Birberger himself, older, fatter, but otherwise unchanged, came out blinking into the bar. He caught sight of Howson and paused in his tracks.

Then he recovered himself, and waddled with an air of joviality across to Howson's table. "By God!" he said. "You must be Sara Howson's boy! Well, I never expected to see you in this place again, after all we heard about you. How you making out, hey?"

"Pretty well," said Howson. "Won't you sit down?"

"Uh? Oh, fine." Birberger fumbled a chair out from under the table, entrusted his bulk to it gingerly, and leaned to rest his arms on the table, hands folded together nervously. "Making out pretty well, hey? So we heard. We see about you sometimes in the news. Must be wonderful work you're doing—never thought you'd

wind up where you are, I must admit. Been a pretty long time since you were in here, now—must be all of ten years."

"Thirteen," said Howson quietly.

"Long as that? You don't say," Birberger rambled on. He had a faint quaver in his rotund voice, and Howson was suddenly aware of a strange realisation: *damn it, the man's afraid of me.*

"Uh—any special reason for coming back?" Birberger probed clumsily. "Or you just looking up the old place?"

"Looking up old friends, more," Howson corrected. He took a sip of his beer; the glass was large, and reminded him of his days here, before he could order things like glasses and cutlery scaled down to his own proportions. "You're the first I've met since I got here an hour or two back."

"Well, it's good of you to count me as an old friend," said Birberger, brightening. "Y'know, I often think of the days when I used to let you help out in here—I remember you had quite an appetite for a"—he might have been going to say "dwarf", but caught himself well ahead and barely revealed that he had mentally changed gears to say—"young fella."

He sat back, as if relieved of some of his worries, and went on, "Y'know, I like to think I managed to give you a helping hand now and again. I guess maybe I suspected you were cut out for something better than this dump." Howson could imagine the rose-colored filters in his memory, going up in self-justification; he remembered very clearly that Charlie Birberger had been an irritable, hard-to-get-on-with employer, given to bawling his assistants (and especially Gerry Howson) out for clumsiness.

Well, no matter. He nodded and smiled, thus relieving Birberger of still more of his first disquiet. "You haven't done too badly yourself, Mr. Birberger," he said. "This place is

pretty smart nowadays. Trade must be good."

Birberger denied it hotly, explaining that but for his own good management the place would long ago have been on the rocks; Howson let him finish, for it would build him up in his own estimation and lend him confidence.

Meantime, he finished eating.

When he, and Birberger, had both done, he got up. "Well, maybe I'll look in again while I'm here," he said. "Can't stop now, though—I'm looking for a lot of people. By the way, there's one person in particular I want to track down. Do you remember a deaf-and-dumb girl who used to live in that same building where I did—the one that they've knocked down to make way for the new apartment block?"

"A deaf-and-dumb girl?" frowned Birberger. "What was her name?"

"Why—" began Howson. And stopped. Then went on: "Why," he said wonderingly, "I never knew. She couldn't talk, of course, so she never told me. But surely you know her. She went away at the same time as I did, and they fixed her up with artificial speech and hearing and she came back here."

"Good—God!" said Birberger, as if struck by a tremendous revelation. "Of course I know who you mean. That's Mary Williams. Married to a guy over on West Walnut, and got a growing family. Only I don't see her these days. That's her for certain—I distinctly remember her getting artificial hearing an' that."

"Over on West Walnut? Where's that?"

"New district since your time, I believe. On the east side of town. Take a number nineteen bus an' it goes right there." Birberger could hardly disguise his eagerness to see Howson safely on that bus and out of his area.

So Howson accommodated him, paying his bill and gathering up his

hand-case. Birberger stumped to the door with him, and shook his hand with care as if touching something rather fragile, but his insistence that Howson should come back as soon as he could rang rather thin.

On an impulse, Howson asked him, "Say, Mr. Birberger—what's your picture of the kind of work I do these days?"

Startled, Birberger improvised, "Why, you—you sort of look into crazy people's minds and—and straighten them out, tell what's wrong with them. Don't you?"

"That's right," Howson said a little unkindly. "Don't worry, though—I'm not looking into your mind. After all, you're not crazy, are you?"

The seeds of the most peculiar kind of doubt were germinating in Birberger's mind as Howson limped down the street towards the stop for an east-bound bus.

Odd: people's differing attitudes to telepathists of any kind. Howson sat in the single seat at the front of the bus near the driver—he was less noticeable there—and pondered the whole question in a way he hadn't done for several years. After all, at the hospital in Ulan Bator there were always three or four telepathists residential on the staff, and often (though not as often as might have been wished) a trainee as well. Their presence was integrated into the routine; they were as accepted and acceptable as the normal psychologists and surgeons.

Occasionally Howson had assisted in the induction of a trainee; their attitudes varied, too—some had reacted like a child with a new-found toy, taking great pleasure in their talent even before they had mastered it properly; some had been like members of a family in Nazi Germany, who had just discovered that they had Jewish ancestry and were trying desperately to pretend that it made

no difference to themselves. It all depended on their background.

The telepathists were so few they barely constituted a minority group, and that—so far—had been their salvation. A tiny fraction of the population of the world had actually met someone with the power; consequently, though most people had prejudices ("I don't really think I'd like someone poking around in *my* mind—I mean, it's the ultimate invasion of privacy, isn't it?—but I don't doubt that they do do some wonderful work!"), few had attitudes.

It was, of course, a mutation; usually it extended only to an extreme hypertrophy of the little group of cells at the base of the brain known as the organ of Funck, which was capable of extraordinarily sensitive resonance with the nerve currents of other human beings. The resonance was reciprocal; if one strikes middle C on a piano with the sustaining pedal down, and then releases the key, one will hear every other C in the instrument ringing very faintly in response. Fainter still, the thirds, fifths and sevenths will also vibrate in sympathy. The more highly developed and functioning the other brain, the more difficult it was for the organ of Funck in the telepathist's brain to influence it. The amount of information which actually passed was staggering; they had given up trying to measure it directly.

Occasionally—once in every few hundred telepathists, and each of those telepathists in turn was one of every few hundred *million* people—an Ilse Kronstadt or Gerry Howson was born, and that person's organ of Funck could cope with the total identity of another individual; with the consciousness, in greater or lesser detail, of dozens of other individual; with the superficial "now" of (possibly) thousands of individuals. Only on that scale the power was practically useless; Gerry Howson could lie

awake in his bed at Ulan Bator and "listen" to the whole hospital, picturing it as a unit functioning in harmony for a common purpose, but he could not pick out more than generalisations such as "I am in pain" or "I am handling an important problem" without losing touch with the totality.

Surprise, distaste, pity, mingled in the glances of those passengers on the bus, and of the driver, who noticed him. He wondered how much all these would have been exaggerated if they had known him for what he was. Only they didn't; he saw no one he remembered from the old days.

"West Walnut, pal," said the driver as he slowed the bus. He was trying to control his prejudice-reactions, and for that Howson gave him a projective wave of warm gratitude. As he stepped to the ground, he was curious enough to "look" back, and found the driver thinking with a smile, "Peculiar-looking character! Nice guy, though..."

He limped to a nearby bench and sat down, looking about him. This was definitely new since his day: the houses were well laid out, there were patches of lawn between them, and children on their way home from school ran and laughed along the paths. He liked what he saw.

A girl—pretty, about twenty, and smartly though not expensively dressed—went past, and he called to her. "Miss!"

She turned, but did not approach him; his appearance unnerved her.

"Miss, do you know where a Mrs. Mary Williams lives near here?"

She hesitated. "No, I'm sorry," she said at length. "I don't know any Williamses here."

She did, of course; she was insuring herself against a million-to-one chance that Howson might spell trouble for her friends, and did not want the responsibility. Howson made his mind up in a moment: the girl forgot

what she had seen when she first turned to answer him, and found herself addressing a pleasant-looking man of middle height with a frank smile and an attractive voice.

"Are you quite sure?" pressed Howson. "I'm certain they live quite close."

She gave ground, wondering why she had had qualms in the first place. "Well, I believe there are some people called Williams in Number 21, although I don't know them personally—"

"Thank you very much," said Howson, and his projected identity smiled again. The girl went on her way rather conscious of his eyes following her.

Number 21. Howson left the bench and went slowly along the path looking for figures on doors. He didn't have very far to go; the house was similar to but not identical with its neighbours on either side, and the flowerbeds were carefully tended. Yes, there was the name over the mailbox—S. Williams. He pressed the bell, having to reach up to it.

After a while the door was cautiously opened, just a crack, and a girl of eight or nine looked through the gap. "What do you want?" she said timidly.

"Does Mrs. Mary Williams live here?" Howson asked.

"Mummy isn't home," the little girl said. "I'm sorry." She sounded very grown up and official.

"Will she be back soon? I'm an old friend of hers, and I want to see her—"

"What is it, Jill?" a boy's voice came from the interior.

"There's a man here who wants to see Mummy," said Jill, and a clatter of shoes announced her brother's descent of the stairs. In a moment the door was opened wide, and a boy a year or two older than his sister was standing there. He was startled at Howson's appearance, and didn't try

to conceal the fact, but he had obviously been taught to be polite, and asked him to come in and wait. "Mummy won't be long," he explained. "She's gone to see Mrs. Oling next door."

Howson thanked him and limped into the lounge. Behind him, as he sat down, he heard an argument going on—Jill complaining that they oughtn't to have let a stranger into the house, and her brother countering scornfully that anyway Howson was no bigger than himself and couldn't be dangerous.

Shyly, the children came into the lounge and sat down on a sofa opposite the chair Howson had taken, at a loss for anything to say. Howson had not had anything to do with children for many years; he felt almost equally tongue-tied.

"Maybe your mother has told you about me," he ventured. "I'm called Gerry—Gerry Howson. I used to know your mother when she was quite a little girl. You're Jill, aren't you? And you're—?"

"I'm Bobby," said the boy. "Uh—do you live near here, Mr. Howson?"

"No, I live in Ulan Bator, in Mongolia. I'm a doctor at a big hospital there."

"A doctor!" This began to thaw Jill's shyness; she leaned forward excitedly. "Ooh! I'm going to be a nurse when I grow up."

"How about you, Bobby? Do you want to be a doctor?"

"No, I don't," said the boy rather slightly. "I want to be an airline pilot or a submarine captain." Then he relented, and with a gravity imitated exactly from some stiff-mannered adult, added, "I'm sure a doctor's work is very interesting, but I don't think it would suit me."

"Mr. Howson," said Jill with a puzzled expression, "if you are a doctor, why have you got a bad leg? Can't you have it fixed?"

"Jill!" said Bobby in horrified

tones. "You *know* you shouldn't say things like that to people!"

He was being grown-up, thought Howson with amusement. "I don't mind," he said. "No, Jill, I can't have it fixed. It happened when I was very little, and now there's nothing that can be done. Besides, I'm not that kind of a doctor. I—" He wondered for a moment how to explain his work, and recollected Birberger's halting, naive version of it. "I look into sick people's minds and tell what's wrong with them."

Bobby's adult manners vanished in a wave of surprise. "You mean you're a crazy doctor? You straighten out mad people?"

"That's right," said Howson with a hint of a smile. "I straighten out mad people. Only 'mad' isn't a very nice word. They're sick; just like you and I get sick if we eat too much, they get sick because they find life too complicated for them. There are lots of nice people who come to my hospital."

They didn't contest the statement, but their disbelief was apparent. Howson sighed. "Would you like me to tell you a story about my work?" he suggested. "I used to tell your mother stories when we were both little... Do you like to be told stories?"

"Depends on the story," said Bobby cautiously. Jill had been sitting in wide-eyed wonder since Howson's revelation that he was a "crazy doctor". Now she spoke up in support of her brother.

"I don't think I'd like a story about crazy people," she said doubtfully. "Even if they are just sick."

"It's very exciting," said Howson quietly. "Much more exciting than being a pilot or a submarine captain, really. It's a wonderful job." He found time to ask himself when he had last realised how completely he meant that before he went on.

"Suppose I tell you about a friend of mine who was sick in my hospital..."

Gently, the technique coming back to him as if he had used it yesterday, he projected the hint that the children should close their eyes—just as he had done so long ago for the poor deaf-and-dumb girl he could not communicate with any other way but in bright, plain images and rich sensory impressions.

First... A hospital ward, efficiency, confidence, kindness. Pretty nurses—Jill could be one of them for an instant, calming a pitiful patient whose tortured face reflected gratitude for her mere presence. With his external eyes he saw a smile pass over her face.

Now... A glance inside the patient's mind. Nightmare: but not a child's nightmare, which would have been too terrifying for them. An adult nightmare, rather—too complex for them to understand fully, but clear enough for them to understand without suffering.

And then... Sharp, well-defined images: the patient running through the corridors of his own mind pursued by horrors from his subconscious; running for help and finding none, until the presence of the doctor suggested reassurance and comfort. Then the harrying monsters paused in their chase; arming themselves with weapons which they could create by merely thinking, patient and doctor together cowed the things and drove them back, cornered them, slew them...

It was a compound of half a dozen cases he had handled as a novice, simple, vigorous and exciting without being too fearful. When he had done, Howson gently broke the link and suggested that they open their eyes again, and the children sat up.

"Goodness," said Bobby with considerable new respect. "Is it really like that?" But he knew it was really like that, and didn't press for an answer.

Jill was about to say something when she glanced around and saw through the open door of the lounge into the entrance hall. "Why, there's Mummy!" she exclaimed. "Mummy, there's a man here to see you—he's been telling us such an exciting story like the ones he used to tell you!"

Mary Williams pushed the door fully open and looked at Howson. Her face—rather coarse, as he remembered it, but with more personality in it and cleverly made up—set in a frozen stare. Through lips which she barely opened, she said, "That was nice of him. Now maybe you'd like to run along so I can talk to Mr. Howson alone."

Obediently the children got up and started for the door. "Will you tell us some more stories some time, please?" Jill threw over her shoulder as they went out.

"If you like," said Howson, smiling; and when they had gone, added to Mary, "Two fine children you have there!"

She ignored the remark. With her face still icy cold and reserved, she said, "Well? What have you come back to plague me for, Gerry?"

Howson waited in blank astonishment for a few seconds. When she did not elaborate this amazing statement, he said only, "I wanted to find out how you were getting on. If you call this plaguing you, I'll go. Right away." He rose to his feet and picked up his hand-case, half-expecting her to open the door for him and say it was good riddance. Instead, she burst into tears.

"Mary!" he exclaimed, and then realised and spoke in the same moment. "You know, that's the first time I've ever called you by name! And we knew each other for a very long time, didn't we?"

She mastered her crying, and gestured for him to sit down again. "I'm sorry," she said weakly—it was amaz-

ing how completely she had learned to control her artificial vocal cords; unless one had looked for the scar on her throat, one could never have told they had been inserted by the hand of man. "It just all came back to me with a rush. It—it's nice of you to think of calling on me, Gerry."

"But what did you mean when you said I'd come back to plague you?"

"Isn't it obvious?" She waved in an all-embracing manner to take in the room, the house, the entire suburb. "Now you *have* come, what have you found? An ordinary sort of housewife with a couple of ordinary kids and a decent enough kind of husband. You can find a million people like me wherever you go. Only—"

She dabbed her eyes dry with a handkerchief and sat up, crossing her legs. "Only you reminded me of what I was going to be. Do you remember? That was why I stopped coming to see you. I'm sorry about that, but I was sure you must know—I mean, with your abilities..." The words tailed off into silence.

"I never looked into your mind or anyone else's unless I was invited to," said Howson softly. "You never let me suspect there was anything wrong. You seemed very happy."

"Why shouldn't I? I didn't really suspect it myself. It was just—well, in the stories you used to tell me, when we were kids together, you remember I was always beautiful and sought-after, and I could hear and talk like anyone else. That was the way I thought it was going to be. I was going to be beautiful and sought-after when I had my ears and my voice. But the only part that came true was the 'like anyone else'. I thought I'd got over it—until I came in through the door and saw you sitting here. And it reminded me that instead of being the—the princess in the fairytale, I'm plain Mary Williams of 21 West Walnut, and I shall never be anything else."

"I'm sorry," said Howson inadequately. He understood, all right—he understood perfectly.

"And of course I've been so jealous of you," she went on in a level tone. "While I had to drop back into this anonymous kind of existence, you became important and famous and seemed to forget about me—"

"I suppose you wouldn't believe me," said Howson meditatively, "if I were to tell you that sometimes I feel as if I could readily give up fame and importance if I could look another man, an ordinary man, straight in the eye, and walk down the street without limping."

She looked at him. In an odd tone, she said, "Yes, Gerry, I think I do believe you. I'm sorry. I heard they hadn't been able to do anything—about your leg, I mean, and all the rest of it."

A thought struck her, and she stiffened. "Gerry—you haven't really been telling Jill and Bobby the same kind of stories you told me? I'd never forgive you if you cursed them with the same kind of discontent!"

"No, you needn't worry. I told them about my work at the hospital, and Jill says she wants to be a nurse, so I don't think you'll find it leaves them discontented."

"It left me that way," Mary mused. "I can still remember the stories you told me more vividly and clearly than I can remember the dreadful room where we used to sit and shiver. The stories are brighter—sort of more definite. While the real world of those days has faded into a blur of browns and greys."

She looked up. "I use some of your stories sometimes, you know. I tell them to the children when they go to bed. But I never told them where I got them from."

"Will you tell them now they've met me?"

"I suppose it doesn't matter if I do."

"You speak very well, Mary—I don't just mean that you use your vocal cords efficiently. You choose your words with a sort of style. Have you ever thought of writing those stories down?"

"No!" She stared at him. "What makes you think I could be a writer?"

Howson shrugged. "Try it. I mean it quite seriously—try it. Even if you don't do them as well as I think you will—and that would be well enough to have them printed—it will help greatly to soften the pain you feel. It'll give them their proper character: pure romance and imagination."

She had not yet replied when there were steps in the hall, and the sound of the children running. A man's voice was heard greeting them affectionately.

"That'll be Steve come home," said Mary dispiritedly. "I wish—"

Howson didn't learn what she wished, for at that moment Williams himself entered the lounge and stopped in surprise at seeing Howson there. "Uh—good afternoon," he said blankly, his eyes asking furious questions of his wife.

"Steve, this is—I suppose I should call you 'doctor', shouldn't I, Gerry?—Dr. Gerry Howson, from Ulan Bator. He used to be a friend of mine before I met you."

Howson got up to shake hands; Williams barely controlled his shock at having to reach so far down, and failed signally to mask the fact that he thought his wife's choice of youthful friends must have been a peculiar one.

"Gerry is a psychiatrist," Mary explained further, and Howson shook his head.

"Not exactly. I'm actually a curative telepathist on the staff of the general mental hospital there—the World Health Organisation's Asian headquarters, you know."

"A telepathist!" The information plainly shook Williams severely. "Uh

—well, how interesting! I never met one of you people before." *And never particularly wanted to*, supplied Howson silently.

There was a pause. Mary tried to fill it by saying in a bright tone, "You'll stay for supper with us, Gerry, I hope?" She frowned down her husband's frantic looks, but Howson suddenly felt he could face no more of this. He made great play of looking at his watch.

"I'm very sorry, but I daren't stay any longer," he said. "I haven't got long to spend here, and I want to look up a good many old acquaintances. I'll have to be on my way."

He collected his case, shook hands, and took his leave. Just as he was on the doorstep, he looked back at Mary. "Apologise to the children for my not being able to tell them another story, won't you?" he said. "And—try not to hate me."

"I won't," said Mary with a wan smile.

"And try not to pity me, either," he finished savagely, turning his back. He wished he could have stormed down the path to the roadway, instead of limping like a rather ridiculous jointed doll.

It wasn't true, of course, that he wanted to look up a lot of people. He had had—somewhere in the back of his mind—an impression that had endured for many years: the notion that of all the things he had done in his life, he had least cause to regret the episode of the deaf-and-dumb girl. He had thought he had acted well—had, in effect, here if anywhere created unalloyed, disinterested happiness. It was a jolt that shook the very foundations of his personality to learn that instead he had left a burden of misery.

Where should he go now? He only knew he wanted to go away from here. Particularly, he didn't want to be anywhere where he might be re-

membered and recognised. Best, then, to strike across town to a district where he had never been all the time he was living here, and sink into the anonymity of a crowd. He couldn't be otherwise than conspicuous, of course, but he could at least be an unknown freak.

A cruising cab failed to answer his hail; in sudden anger he made as if to project a deafening mental shout into the driver's mind, but at the last moment he realised that the man had merely mistaken him for a child playing a prank. He contented himself with suggesting that the driver think again, and this time the vehicle swung around and came back to him.

The driver was a thick-set man with humorous eyes; he took in Howson's appearance, considered it, dismissed it. "Sorry, pal," he said cheerfully. "Dreaming, I guess. I lose more fares that way—Where to?"

What was the name of the street? "There's a sort of maze of streets just the other side of Grand Avenue, isn't there?" Howson said. "Around there will do."

"Sort of Jackson Street way? I know where y'mean. Okay."

It was beginning to darken when he paid the cab off and looked around him. He welcomed the dimness of the side-streets—Grand Avenue itself no longer lived up to its name, since the fashionable quarters had drifted slightly even in the thirteen years he had been away, and completed a process which had already been in operation when he left. Here there was a rather shabby bar, lights low, uncrowded. That would serve as well as anywhere for a refuge.

He went in, ordered a drink, and hid himself away in the furthest corner, feeling a deep-seated misery. What next? Where next?

Now that he could view his journey with detachment, he saw that he must originally have been motivated by a need—a need to justify himself to

himself. "Why," Hugh Choong had asked from his hospital bed, "why do you feel guilty about using your ability for your own enjoyment?"

Because, he might have answered, when I did use it for my own enjoyment it repaid me with the subconscious realisation that I had caused suffering.

He might, he now realised, have deduced that poor Mary would hate her ordinary existence once she had realised how ordinary it was in truth. He had not examined the idea too closely—presumably, because he reared the consequence of actually knowing. Now he knew indeed, and he was shorn of a protection he had long valued. He had to face the fact that he had assumed he had bestowed disinterested happiness—and had in truth been using Mary as an admiring and delighted audience for his own entertainment of himself.

Well, he saw it now with great clarity, but the simple knowledge left him less able than before to reconcile himself to the situation as it was.

Other things grew clear in his mind, too. Maybe at least part of his insistence on running himself ragged, exhausting himself on an unbroken succession of patients in the Ulan Bator mental hospital, was due to a desire to see them feel indebted to him. Much of his life before he was discovered for what he was had been a patchwork of favours received from people of all sorts—even Charlie Birberger had been speaking only the literal truth when he mentioned giving Howson a helping hand. Maybe, in a twisted way, he was eager for normal un-handicapped people to feel indebted to him for favours he might have withheld.

But this self-analysis could go on indefinitely. He could comfort himself with the indubitable fact that he had done a hell of a lot of good work. And would do more. But he had come away from Ulan Bator in order to re-

store some kind of confidence in himself, and so far he had merely succeeded in depriving himself of a number of self-defensive illusions. He had a long way to go, and a lot to do, before he could safely return to his job and feel secure in it.

Only he had *no* idea where to go next.

He ordered another drink; it was brought, and as he sipped it he grew aware of raised voices at the opposite table. A group of two young men—both shabby, both at least two days unshaven—and a plain girl with fair hair and a rather shapeless dress, were getting somewhat heated over an argument. At least, one man and the girl were; the other man seemed to be looking on with amusement.

"But don't you see?" thundered the girl, slamming her open palm on the table so that the trio's glasses jumped. "All you're doing is to discard everything that's been produced in a century and a half in order to go back to something which has been done twenty times over better than *you'll* ever manage to do it!"

"You must be blind, deaf, dumb and moronic to say a stupid thing like that!" blazed back her opponent. "One of your most damnable faults, and you've got plenty, is making wild and empty generalisations. Anyone with a grain of intelligence—"

"Excuse me, you two," said the mildly amused young man. "I'll come back when it's less deafening."

"Good riddance!" snapped the girl as he picked up his drink and crossed the floor to Howson's table. Howson bridled instinctively, but the stranger took in his appearance without comment.

"Mind if I sit over here for a bit? I won't be able to get a word in edgewise with those two for at least half an hour, and in any case neither of them really knows what they're talking about. Cigarette?"

Howson was on the point of refus-

ing—no one at the hospital habitually smoked, since even with carcinogen-free tobacco it might turn out to be a costly luxury—when it occurred to him that this young man had no means of knowing that he was anything other than what his vacant face suggested, yet had accepted him without strain and with perfect aplomb, as a fellow man. He took the cigarette with a word of thanks.

"What's it all about, anyway?" he ventured as he bent to take a light.

"Charma," said the other round his cigarette, contriving to draw in the flame and speak simultaneously, "is of course perfectly right in insisting that Jay is doing thoroughly incompetent work. She is totally wrong in maintaining that he is merely repeating something which has been done hundreds of times. He isn't—he's got an idea in his head which is fairly original, but he simply isn't good enough to cope with it. He thinks he is. That's about all there is to it."

"Does this happen a lot?"

"It goes on all the flaming time," said the young man in a ponderous and aggrieved tone.

"And what sort of work?"

"Uh—oh, bit hard to define. I suppose you might call it liquid mobiles. Charma's got it into her head that it's derived in equal parts from Hero's syphons, the fountains at Versailles and a fireworks display, and consequently isn't original, while Jay kids himself he never borrowed an idea from anyone or anywhere. Main trouble is he ought to be a chemist and hydrodynamicist as well as a guy with an eye for a lighting effect, and he isn't, so he can't make the most of the technique's very genuine possibilities."

About twenty-two or twenty-three, Howson judged as he looked at his new acquaintance. He was of medium height, plump, good-looking, with untidy black hair and heavy glasses. He wore an elderly shirt open at the

neck, dark trousers with light stains on the knees, and open sandals. An enormous watch caught the light on his wrist. A sheaf of pens and pencils was clipped in his shirt pocket.

"You're students?" suggested Howson. The other shook his head.

"No more no more. We got a wee bit dissatisfied with academic standards a few months ago, and since the academic standard-bearers were likewise less than pleased with us, we agreed to sign a truce and get the hell out. 'Nother drink?"

"No, let me," said Howson, and signalled a waiter. He paid with the top-most of a bundle of notes which made his companion whistle with awe.

"It always gives me pleasure to accept a drink from the rich," he said solemnly. "It means I am doing my humble bit towards the redistribution of capital."

"Better set 'em up for those two as well," Howson told the waiter, indicating Jay and Charma. "Uh—what's your own particular line?"

"I compose. Badly. What's yours?"

"I'm a doctor," said Howson after a second's hesitation, and his companion nodded with interest.

"I'd never have guessed. Have to tell Brian about that—he's an embryo sociologist we know, who's doing a survey to correlate professions and trades with physical types. Mark you, it's not all that important that you should be a doctor—someone like you is calculated to throw a spanner in the works no matter what you do for a living—a sort of wild variable, in fact."

Howson was astonished to find himself uttering his reply with hardly any self-consciousness. "Unless I'd been a circus dwarf or something like that," he said.

"True," said the other reflectively. "Oh, what the hell—he could find an excuse to fit you into the theory anyway. I keep trying to wipe that complacent grin off his face—best one I

came up with yet was a woman of fifty-odd, fat as a hippopotamus, weighed about three hundred pounds, who'd been teaching dancing for thirty years. He even fitted her in, blast him. Oh well—say, you've managed to quiet them down!"

Howson glanced round. Charma was lifting her newly-filled glass to him. "Your doing?" she said. "Thanks!" And drank thirstily.

"Rudi!" Jay said with a glance at the clock on the wall. "Things ought to be waking up at Clara's by now. Think we could drop by?"

"Good idea. Hey, this guy here's a doctor—I think we might tell Brian that and see how his face drops, no?"

"Why not?" said Charma, but Jay pulled a wry face.

"He'd never believe it. He didn't believe in the dancing teacher till we took him round to her studio."

"All right, we'll prove it to him. Is he going to be at Clara's tonight?"

"When did you know that man to miss a party?" said Jay bitterly.

"I didn't," agreed Rudi. "Okay—that is, if you're not doing anything—uh—?"

"Gerry," supplied Howson. "Well, I'm afraid—" And he suddenly heard himself saying something to Pandit Singh about having at least some chance of standing up to the world now. Besides, if he could face people of any kind, it would be people like these—iconoclastic, angry about prejudice, ready to accept him if only because he was unusual and unique. He chopped off the sentence he had begun, and grinned instead.

"On course," said Rudi with apparent irrelevance; Howson assumed him to mean "that's fine" or something similar, and wondering at his own self-possession (did the drinks have something to do with it?) he accompanied them down the aisle to the door.

"Taking a cab?" he suggested as they reached the street, and Jay gave

a hoot of laughter.

"Jay, you are the most unobservant bastard," said Rudi severely. "Just because you're long-legged and bursting with vitamin C you think everyone shares your passion for wearing out shoe-leather. Now I, since I'm observant even if you're not, happen to have observed that Gerry here has a wad of money on him big enough to buy us a cab for the trip. Yes, certainly we'll take a cab," he finished, turning to Howson with an elaborate bow.

By this time, of course, Howson knew that if he went no further on his journey he had achieved at least partial success.

He'd missed this kind of people—somehow. To be expected, really. One of the most significant effects of the impact of an improved standard of living, as he had superficially and intellectually been aware, is to postpone the age at which opinions congeal in the individual. Someone forced by poverty to avoid wasting time on enlarging his horizons which he needed for simply staying alive adopted the attitudes, ready-made, of his environment. This was one of the reasons why students formed the backbone of a good many early and mid-twentieth century revolutionary movements.

And there was a simple and encapsulated reason why, when their cab drew up at the address Jay had given the driver, Rudi picked up Howson's bag for him and gave him a hand out of the vehicle. And why Howson didn't raise an objection.

Improved standards of living hadn't made very much impact at all on *his* early life.

As he scrambled up the narrow stairway of the apartment building they had come to, he was asking himself whether they might be expected to have adopted attitudes and prejudices towards telepathists, if they hadn't done so towards dwarfs and cripples. He didn't feel tempted to

find out the direct way—the whole question was too delicate.

His detachment returned to temper his sudden wave of enthusiasm, however, after he had actually been at the party for an hour or so. The premises were small—a bed-sitting room, with minuscule kitchen adjacent—and there were a *lot* of people in them—not including Brian, the man he was supposed to have come to meet, but including a good many other students. For the first few minutes he rather enjoyed being shown off as a spanner to be put into Brian's works; then, though, after a rapid and superficial series of introductions, the three who had brought him became embroiled in conversation with older friends, and left him to his own devices.

He was at two disadvantages then: his stature made it hard for the other people to keep him in on the argument unless they were sitting down and he was standing, and there was little opportunity to sit down except on the floor. On top of that, his voice was rather quiet at the best of times, and his words hard to catch if there was any competing noise. Here there was a lot of competing noise—voices raised in heated disagreement, cups and glasses and bottles clattering, even before someone arrived with a concertina and began to play regardless of who cared to listen.

He was beginning to feel a little lost and out of place when he noticed that someone had incautiously vacated a few square inches of the edge of the bed, next to the wall. He sat down and leaned back; someone came past and poured him a fresh drink, and after that no one paid him any attention for several minutes.

He occupied himself in eavesdropping on a number of the conversations—it was impolite, but it was too interesting to be forgone. The only other student company he had ever found himself in was while they were train-

ing him for his work as a curative telepathist, and since he had had to instruct himself most of the time, he had missed the air of freedom he found here. More: there were so few telepathists that the entire company of his fellow-students during his training period numbered fewer than there were people in this one room.

Group A (he categorised them in the course of a brief survey): two girls, apparently sisters, in yellow, and a man of twenty-five or so; subject under examination—religion as a necessity of human social evolution.

Group B: Jay, whom he knew, a long-haired boy who might still be in his teens, another with a slight stammer which kept getting in the way of his arguments, and an ugly woman with glasses and a fringe; subject—a revue for which Jay was doing the decor.

Group C: a good-looking girl of twenty and a man in a red sweater; subject—each other. Howson felt a stir of envy and firmly diverted his attention.

Group D: four men with very loud voices standing close to the concertina-player; subject (sparked off, it seemed, by the instrument)—influence of new musical devices on the subsequent work of composers. One of the group kept trying to talk about his own work; the others kept forcibly steering him away from it.

Group E: two girls, one slightly drunk, the other perfectly sober, and two men; subject—the drunken girl's views on modern poetry. Group F: three men, two in open-necked shirts and one in a sweater; subject—the impossibility of living up to one's own ideals in later life.

Howson was flirting dangerously with the idea of joining in one of these conversations (any of them bar Group C) by telepathic means, when he realised the suggestion probably came from the drink before last and stopped himself with a sigh. Looking about him with his physical eyesight,

he became aware of a girl who had sat down next to him while he was paying attention somewhere else, and was now looking at him with an amused expression. She was young, and fairly attractive, wearing a shapeless cardigan in a blue which clashed horribly with her green eyes.

"Good evening," she said with slight formality and more than a hint of mockery. "Meet me. I'm your hostess."

Howson sat up. "I'm sorry," he began. "Rudi and Jay insisted on my coming—"

"Oh, you're welcome," she said, dismissing the point with a wave of her hand. "If anyone ought to make apologies, I think I should, for neglecting a guest for so long. I just haven't had a spare moment. However: are you enjoying yourself?"

Howson nodded. "Yes, very much, thank you."

"I thought you might be, even if you didn't seem to be. What were you doing—drinking in atmosphere?"

"I suppose you might call it that." Howson tried to keep his voice at its loudest. "I was actually thinking that I'd never been in a room with quite so many interesting young people in it."

"Bloody, isn't it? I know. What really makes me wild is that at parties like this at least a dozen world-changing schemes get dreamed up, and never get put into practice. Oh well—it's been happening for centuries, to be conservative, and it's likely to go on happening. Might be a good idea to note down all the schemes and make something out of them—book, or pamphlet—in the hope that that way they'd get to someone who could make use of them." She unfocused her eyes, as if looking at a future possibility. "Might have a crack at it, at that. But that's probably just another of those same world-changing schemes."

"You're a writer?"

"Potential. Who told you?"

Howson shrugged; he didn't do it very well, for reasons connected with the withered muscles of his lower back. "I wasn't told. But you seem to have so many people here who write or do something of the kind."

The girl (her name would be Clara, if she was the hostess) offered him a cigarette; he refused, but borrowed someone else's burning one to light hers for her. (Where the hell had he got *that* from? Certainly he had never done such a thing in his life. Movie scene, perhaps, left over from—from... It came as a considerable shock to realise that he was actually in that same city where he had seen the film.)

"Uh-huh," Clara was saying. "No, but me, I suffer from a congenital dissatisfaction with words. I mean—hell, if you just took the people at this party, or even a group of them, and attempted to explore just the few hours they spend here fully, you'd wind up with something twice the size of Proust. And you *still* couldn't be sure you were communicating with your audience. What one needs is a technique which would enable a pre-Columbian Amerind to understand a story about a twentieth-century Chinese. Then—brother! You'd be a writer!"

"I see what you mean," said Howson.

"How about you? What's your line?"

"I'm a doctor," said Howson. "Rudi wanted to bring me here to meet someone who's trying to correlate physical types with trades and professions. Brian was the name. I think."

"Oh, yes. Rudi's forever trying to prove he's wrong. I imagine you made him think pretty hard to fit you in. What did he say?"

"I don't know. I haven't been introduced to him yet."

"Well, if that isn't Rudi all over... Damn it, Brian's *been* here for the

better part of an hour. —Oh, maybe he'll remember sooner or later that he brought you here. Do you mind? Or do you want to get it over with and go?"

Howson shook his head and smiled. Someone tapped his arm and held a bottle over his now empty glass; he shook his head and put the glass down on the bedside table.

"Who or what is Rudi exactly?" he asked. He was rather more interested in Rudi than in the other two whom he had met in the bar that evening; he could, of course, have found out everything he wanted to know with one quick telepathic sweep, but he shrank from the notion as he would have done from the idea of intruding on—say—Pandit Singh's mind without invitation. Rudi struck him as having a somewhat more mature personality than most of the people here assembled.

"Rudi?" Clara blew smoke through her nostrils. "Rudi Allef is his full name. Half-Israeli, I gather. He came here under a grant a couple of years ago, and he was doing—well, I think he was doing—some rather good work. Only it wasn't the work he was supposed to be doing to qualify for the grant. So they discontinued it. So Jay and Charma Horne—"

"Jay and Charma Horne? Brother and sister?"

Clara stared at him. "No, whatever gave you that extraordinary idea? They're married."

"*Married!* Good lord!"

"Well—but why shouldn't they be?"

"It was just the way they were rowing with each other when I first saw them—doesn't matter. Sorry, go on."

"Ah-h-h—yes. So Jay and Charma, anyway, being slightly crazy, as you might expect in view of their having got married under the circumstances, quit in sympathy. Sorry, you were asking about Rudi. Rudi is—well, a problem."

"Odd you should say that," Howson remarked, puzzled. "He—well, obviously you know him better than I do. But I would have said he was rather a well-balanced and unproblematical person."

"He seems that way." Clara looked across the room to where the subject of their discussion sat on the floor near the concertina-player. Her eyes unfocused again. "Maybe one of these days, if he keeps up the act long enough, he'll convince himself that that's the way he really is. And a good thing, too. Otherwise—he will suffer a serious breakdown, and probably not be very much good to himself or anybody for a long, long time."

"Does the probability show?"

She came back to the present and shook herself very slightly. "If you know where to look for it. Sorry, I think I ought to go into circulation and attend to the other guests. See you later."

She had just got to her feet when she turned back. "I don't mean to be rude," she said. "But you seem to be a bit of a problem too. Are you?"

Howson looked her as hard in the eye as he could. "You seem to be good at spotting problems," he answered. "Make your own mind up."

"I deserved that," she said, and turned away.

And after all that, Howson realised, he still hadn't found out very much about Rudi Allef.

But at that moment Rudi himself remembered about Brian's sociological theories, dragged Brian away from his argument, and presented Howson to him. More than ever, as he looked at Rudi's eager grin, Howson found himself tempted to take one quick glance—just one!—inside that well-shaped head.

And if he did, and proceeded to display—even inadvertently—a knowledge of Rudi he couldn't possibly have obtained ordinarily in the course

of a short acquaintance...? Howson suddenly realised that he felt what it must have been like for a mulatto "passing" in the southern U.S.A. a few years before. In that moment the room seemed to grow cold.

He just hadn't *known* this sort of feeling before. He was a dwarf and a cripple; all right, that much passed for granted. But there were some people, and might be some even here, who considered him alien. Maybe, when the time came to tell them (he didn't question that he would get to know them well enough to consider telling them) they would shrug and continue to regard him as a nice guy. Or maybe not.

Perhaps, in sheer self-defence, he ought to find out their opinions before committing himself—? He could do it in a moment!

Then he realised he had failed to catch something that was said to him, and reflexively picked the words out of Rudi's mind. He was halfway through his answer before he realised what he had done, and the room grew even colder. He was so used to being among people who knew him for what he was that he had acquired (inevitably) habits such as that one. The shock made him stumble in his answer, but he recovered and went on.

The one glimpse inside Rudi's mind had made the idea of probing deep still more tempting, but he told himself carefully: *he's not a patient, not even a fellow member of a hospital staff.* Too far already; no further!

He forced himself to concentrate on the conversation, and Brian was already freeing himself of his harassed expression. "Oh, not at all," he was saying. "After all, people like Dr. Howson here are exceptions wherever you try to fit them in. I mean, they're like trying to predict the next atom of uranium due to disintegrate. You know one of them's going to pop, but you can't say which. Equally, you know that Dr. Howson has to fit in

somewhere, but you couldn't predict where without a lot of other data—"

He droned on, while Howson's mind took hold of one short phrase and worried it over and over.

"Dr. Howson has to fit in somewhere..."

It was very much later when Clara sat down near him again; the room was less full of people, which indicated that some of them must have gone home or decided to camp out on the stairs, for there was no other place they could be.

"Oh, that man Rudi," she said in a tone that mixed annoyance with tolerant long-suffering. "He's out in the kitchen being miserable. You wouldn't think it to look at him, of course. He's giving imitations of some of the university staff, with props, and about half a dozen idiots are laughing at it."

"If you wouldn't think it to look at him, how would you know?" said Howson bluntly. Then a possibility occurred to him, and he caught himself. "I'm sorry. Obviously you know him very well."

"If you think he's—well, shall we be polite and say 'an intimate friend'?—you're wrong," said Clara in a cool and slightly reproachful voice. "Matter of fact, I hardly knew him till this matter of his leaving the university came up the other day."

She looked puzzled. "Come to think of it..."

Since Howson had jumped to exactly the conclusion Clara had just disabused him of, he shared her puzzlement. There was an obvious explanation, of course, but it failed to fit the facts at a couple of points.

At that moment several people came out of the kitchen, laughing heartily, and Rudi was with them. Howson scanned his face: no, it betrayed no sign of the misery Clara had claimed to detect.

While his companions took their

leave, reducing the number of survivors to about eight or nine, Rudi helped himself from a handy bottle without seeming to care much about what was in it, and went back into the kitchen. Howson assumed he had gone back to rejoin somebody. He looked around the room, trying to ignore the girl and the man in the red sweater, who had progressed beyond conversation as a means of showing their interest in each other.

"You seem, as I said before," Clara remarked as she came back to his side, "to have problems. Yes, I've made up my own mind on the point. What's worse, I've had to dismiss the obvious reasons why you should have them. After all, you can't have been all that handicapped if you're a doctor."

Her green eyes were very penetrating; Howson felt uneasy, and the unease was not due to her remarking on his deformity. He said with an attempt at lightness, "Do you put all your guests through this interrogation?"

"Only the uninvited ones who interest me," she said unperturbed.

Howson was framing his answer when he felt a shock that almost threw him forward off the bed. The intensity of it blinded him for a second; it raged inside his skull like a fire. He knew what it was. Even before he had fully regained his senses, he found himself shouting, "In the kitchen! It's Rudi!"

Everyone in the room looked round in blank astonishment. And Howson realised that there hadn't been a sound.

Everyone in the room—except, it dawned on him, Clara. And Clara, white-faced, was already opening the kitchen door. She couldn't have got there so quickly in answer to his words of warning; she *couldn't* have. And that meant—

She screamed.

Howson was cursing his unrespon-

sive body as he struggled to his feet, when already half a dozen astonished people were crowding with a babble of horrified cries through the door. Their voices were incoherent; it didn't matter. He knew perfectly well what had happened.

Brian, the sociologist, spoke up authoritatively. "Don't touch him! Get the little guy in here—he's a doctor. And someone phone for an ambulance! Clara, is there a phone?"

"Not in the house." The girl answered in a shaky but controlled voice. "On the corner there's a public call-box—"

Meantime Howson was dragging himself through five seconds of time slowed to the duration of an hour. I'm a doctor, he was thinking. I know all about lesions to the cerebellum—I have to. I know all about personality disturbances. But what the hell good is that to a guy leaking his life away on a hard kitchen floor?

They stood aside to let him pass, and he looked down with physical sight for the first time on something that was already too familiar to him. Rudi had literally and exactly committed hara-kiri (why? Because it's very, very efficient) with a common carving knife from the nearby table.

Now he was unconscious the blinding pain from his mind was easier to shut out. But the pain of his own helplessness was not. These people—these people!—were looking to him for help, advice, guidance...

He found his voice. "Anyone gone for that ambulance?"

A chorus assured him someone had.

"Good. Then get out of here. And shut the door. And if you can, keep quiet. Better yet, get the hell out of here—no, better not, in case the police get curious. Oh, *blast* the police! Go home!"

Clara was going to join the others, but he frowned and said nothing, and she heard him. Shyly she closed the door and came back to his side.

"Know anything about this sort of thing?" he said grimly.

"N-no. But I'll do anything you say. Is there anything we can do?"

"He will be dead in about five minutes unless we do something." Howson laughed without humour. "Only, you see, the joke is that I'm not a doctor of medicine. I never so much as dressed a cut finger in my life."

"Then— Oh, *God*. Poor stupid Rudi!"

"Not quite so bad as that. Do you know you're a receptive telepathist?"

The new shock, coming on top of the shock of seeing Rudi weltering in his blood, left her speechless. She could only shake her head in a mixture of disbelief and denial.

"Well, you are. And my doctor's degree happens to be in curative telepathy. There's one person in this room who knows—perhaps—what Rudi Allef needs to heal him. And that's Rudi Allef."

She tried to interrupt, but he rushed on, not bothering to use words now. *Deep in Rudi's brain, as in everyone's except mine, there's what we call the body-image—the blueprint the body uses for its own repairs. I'm going after it. You will have to take from me instructions and carry them out. Don't try to think for yourself—just relax.*

And with that, he simultaneously reached deep into Rudi's failing mind and took over the control of Clara's hands. She struggled, but gamely tried to overcome her instinctive resistance, and within a minute she was lifting back Rudi's shoulders so they could see the gashed opening in his belly.

The sight shocked her so much Howson momentarily lost contact; he spared a valuable second to reassure her, and then continued his exploration of Rudi's body image.

So many of his neurones were reporting damage and pain that he could not at first distinguish between

them; he decreased his sensitivity, but that only resulted in a vague blur.

He sat down on a chair and steeled himself. Then he began again.

This time it was as if the nerves were reporting their agony directly to himself, as if his own body were lying torn and ruined. But none of that must be relayed to Clara, or it would render her assistance useless. He had to absorb the pain himself...

All right, then. What first? Stop the leakage of blood, for the activity of the brain was wasting away. Something—clips? Hair-clips? Women usually had something of the sort.

Clara had some. In a bowl. Only a foot from her shoulder. She seized them and furiously began to clip off the torn bloodvessels. The weakening of the brain diminished, remained steady at an irreducible trickle.

All right. Put back the displaced intestines.

Covered with blood, Clara's hands seized the grey-blue living guts and settled them tenderly in place; stretched the mesenteries and restored them to their position; and with each action came a reduction of the pain and damage reports from the neurones. By the time she had completed the replacement of the internal organs, Howson was able to open his eyes. He had not realized they were shut.

"An ordinary needle and thread," he said huskily, and she got them; she left bloody hand-prints on the table, on the door-handle, everywhere. "Stitch the stomach wall together," he directed, and she did, clumsily by surgical standards, but well enough. "Now the skin itself; now wash your hands and get a clean piece of cloth to dress it—"

Rudi's mind blazed up as he returned for an instant to consciousness, unexpectedly; Howson gritted his teeth and slapped the personality back into oblivion. Rough and ready treatment, but then, so much damage

had already been done to Rudi's consciousness a little more would make no difference.

But the tiny flicker of life smouldered on. It would last, now, until a blood transfusion, and then they could repair the damage properly. Meantime, he would live, and that was all Howson could ask.

It had all taken exactly five minutes.

Now there would be police; questions; attempted suicide was probably a crime here—he seemed to remember it was. He would have to do something about that...

Clara came back from putting away the needle and thread, and stood silently looking down at her handiwork. "What did he have to try and kill himself for?" she said half-angrily, and Howson shook his head. He felt as tired as if he had walked a thousand miles, but he couldn't yield to weariness.

"He didn't kill himself, or even try to," he said. "He had an accident. It was stupid, but not criminal. A joke that went too far."

She saw all that was going on in his mind, and nodded without him needing to explain further, but he had to explain when the ambulance at last arrived, and then when the police came, and after it all he was so exhausted he went to sleep in a chair where he sat down.

When he awoke, he was for a long while puzzled as to where he could be. He lay on his back, between comfortable sheets, and a pillow was under his head. But the bed didn't have that slight ingenious bias which had been built into his own bed at the hospital in Ulan Bator, and which favoured his withered leg so subtly. More, the light played on the too-high ceiling in the wrong manner.

He came fully awake and turned on his side, and saw that Clara, wrapped in a dressing-gown, was dozing un-

easily in the room's one arm-chair.

She probably sensed his awakening, and blinked, her eyes open. She didn't say anything for a few moments. Then she smiled. "Feeling all right?" she asked banally. "You were so fast asleep you didn't even move when I put you to bed."

"You—put me to bed?"

"What did you expect me to do? Leave you on the floor?" She got to her feet and stretched. Then she took off the dressing-gown; she had pulled it on over the same shapeless sweater she had been wearing the evening before.

"But you shouldn't have done that," he protested. "I'd have been all right in that chair."

"Oh, shut up!" she said almost angrily. "You deserved a bed more than I did, by Christ. I don't want to argue about it—feel capable of breakfast?"

Howson sat up; he found she had taken off his shoes and jacket and left him otherwise fully dressed, so he pulled aside the bedclothes and got to the floor. "Well, you know—you know, I think I do."

She brought cereals and coffee and opened a can of fruit juice, and they sat eating off their knees on the edge of the unmade bed.

"What I want to know," said Clara after a while, "is how you managed to fob off the men from the hospital and the police with that phony story about an accident."

Howson dismissed it. "Look, if there's one thing a projective telepathist can do convincingly, it's tell a lie. I think I'd better fix the same sort of idea in the skull of the other people who were here—or could you rely on them to keep quiet?"

She considered, "I think so," she said at last.

"All right... But I wish I hadn't told them to clear out, after all. It was just that I was worried in case their presence, in their excited state, might distract me... Well, let it

slide."

He put aside the bowl from which he had been eating. "I should have asked you before. How do you feel about being a telepathist yourself?"

The green eyes held a hint of uncertainty. "Then you meant what you said? I tried to—to receive something from you last night, and nothing happened, so I guessed you'd just told me to give me confidence, or something," she finished lamely.

"You were probably just exhausted. But I did really mean what I said. Tell me something: how did you know what Rudi had done?"

"Why, he—he screamed!"

"He didn't utter a sound. He might have been a Samurai, the way he did it. If he *had* screamed, everyone in the room would have heard. Only you and I knew what had happened, and that means you're a receptive telepathist. I'd already begun to suspect you might be; I'm surprised you hadn't done so yourself."

She finished eating and lit a cigarette. "Oh, this is all so—disturbing! I mean, I'd always thought of telepathists as people sort of—you know, *apart*."

"They are," said Howson with quiet grimness.

"And I didn't even know there were—what do you call them?—receptive ones."

"Rather few, as a matter of fact. I've met—oh, a dozen or so, I suppose. But you're about the right age for the talent to develop, you know. I was twenty-two when they discovered me. As a matter of fact, I suspect there probably a lot more receptive telepathists than we know about—I mean, you can spot a projective telepathist just by walking down the street a mile from him, if he's reasonably powerful and totally untrained—he stands out like a fire alarm! But how do you spot a receptive one, unless something happens to identify him—or her—beyond

doubt? However... Now you know about yourself, what do you propose to do?"

"I—don't know." She looked rather frightened. "I haven't even had time to think out how I'm going to tell my family."

"That was a problem I never had to face," said Howson, grimly. "Do your family have—uh—prejudices, then?"

"I don't really know. I'm afraid they might have. After all, being a telepathist is something pretty special, isn't it? And it sort of limits you to a few professions where you can make use of it?" A thought creased her brow. "I meant to ask—what the hell do receptive telepathists do, anyway?"

Howson shrugged. "Every new case opens up a new possibility. But I can tell you of one or two jobs I know: psychiatric diagnostician, therapy watchdog—"

"What?"

"Therapy watchdog. I've often worked with one. If the curative telepathist wants to report progress on a case while going along, without breaking his linkage with the patient, he has one of the watchdogs sit in on the case and give a verbal account of it to the doctors in charge. Then there's Olaf Marks, who's the world's only genius-spotter—his business is to discover outstandingly brilliant children in the pre-verbal stage. Fortunately, he loves kids. And Danny Waldemar is also a spotter, only he tours the world looking for projective telepathists—he found me, in fact, right here in this city. And there's Makerakera, who's another of these 'world's only' types: a sort of peacemaker's mate, who's recognized by the United Nations as an authority on aggression and spends his time nipping impending warfare in the bud. Oh, there's no need to worry about choice of a job. We telepathists are near enough unique to be able to

manufacture our own."

She gave a little nervous laugh. "It's funny to hear you say 'we telepathists' and know you're including me. I wish, though, I had projective ability if I had anything at all—then I wouldn't need to worry about my family's reactions... Still, what you say is quite reassuring."

"It's the truth. You know, you wouldn't be happy doing anything else once your talent developed fully. You'd be like a sighted man trying to confine himself to working in an unlit cellar." Howson sighed. "Lord knows, though, to be a telepath poses its own problems... You were right about me, last night, of course."

"More—more receptive telepathy?"

"What do you think?"

She got up and began clearing away the breakfast dishes without answering. After an interval of silence, she said, "How about Rudi, Gerry? Did you have a chance to find out what made him do it?"

"No. One has to learn not to intrude on another mind's privacy. One *has* to, or life wouldn't be worth living. And while we were patching him up, of course, I couldn't waste time. You've had a much better chance to find out why he did it."

She made a helpless gesture. "All I knew was that he was acting. Living a lie, as they say. Doing it well, *but*... Gerry, what exactly are you doing in this town, anyway. Looking up old acquaintances, or something?"

"I looked up a couple. That was a failure. No, I'm after new acquaintances rather than old ones. I suppose you might say I was on holiday, though it's more of a voyage of self-discovery... You'll find out what I mean some day."

Clara accepted the hint. "So—what should I do now, to get back to my own worries?" She smiled faintly.

"Officially, you ought to drop by at the local World Health Organization office and they'd fly you to

Ulan Bator or Canbera or perhaps Hong Kong for testing and training. I'd say, get used to the idea before you report in."

"You seem awfully certain that I will report in—and yet I'm sure you wouldn't announce my existence if I asked you not to."

"Of course I wouldn't. Only after a while you'll get dissatisfied with your own incompetence; you'll get frustrated by things you don't know how to handle. Then one day you'll say, 'Ah, the hell with it', and go and ask to learn how to use your gift properly." He shrugged. "It wasn't telepathists who worked out the techniques for using it, you know—it was ordinary psychologists who could no more project an impression than ride a bicycle to the moon. And now I want you to do me a favour. Go to phone and call the hospital where they took Rudi—it's the Main General, and he'll be in Queen's Ward, probably under sedation still. Ask if we can—I'm sorry. Are you busy this morning?"

She shook her head.

"Then ask if we, if you want to come, can see him. Give them my name, Gerald Howson, and tell them I'm Psi. D., Ulan Bator. They'll fall over themselves to let us come."

"Then why bother to call them up first?"

Howson looked at her steadily. "I want them to have a chance to learn that I'm a lame dwarf instead of a husky superman," he said calmly. "It—hurts me less that way."

Clara looked away. "That was tactless of me," she said.

"Yes," said Howson, and got up. "I'll make myself smart while you go and call the hospital."

Rudi Allef lay in his hospital bed with a cradle keeping the bedding off his injured abdomen. He was not unconscious, but he was chiefly aware of pain. The sedatives he had

been given had reduced it to the level of a raging headache, which enabled him for short periods to sidestep it inside his mind and think coherently, but most of the time the effort simply did not seem worthwhile.

When Howson came to him, he lay unmoving with his eyes tightly shut.

The hospital was very much the same as any other hospital, and Howson of course was used to these surroundings. The hardly veiled deference with which he, as a Psi. D. Ulan Bator, was treated was the thing which most frequently reminded him that he was actually a stranger here. It seemed that about half the staff wanted to accompany him to the patient's bed, but he showed temper for the first time in many months, and refused to permit anyone but the surgeon who had operated and the nurse in charge to come with him. And Clara, naturally.

Howson could tell she was uncomfortable; now that she knew of her gift, she was more able to receive the impressions it gave her, and she had not yet learned when in a hospital to concentrate on the undercurrent of healing beneath the ever-present sensations of pain. Out of momentary sympathy, and in memory of his own beginnings, he loaned her self-confidence with his mind.

They came into the ward, and screens were drawn around the bed where Rudi lay. A rubber pipe was taped to his arm; he would have been given several transfusions to build up his diminished blood supply.

Howson stepped between the screens, and the nurse drew them close behind the party. There was a chair there already; awkwardly, because it was a full-sized chair, Howson scrambled on to it and peered into Rudi's mind.

Meantime he spoke in words to the surgeon, saying, "What sort of state was he in?"

"Bad," said the surgeon, a straight-bodied woman of forty. "He would have been dead if it hadn't been for the first-aid he received. It was just as well you were there, Dr. Howson—though I didn't know curative telepathists ever had a full-scale medical course."

"They don't," said Howson. And repeated, "I'd never even so much as bandaged a cut finger before."

He could feel the resentment hardening in her as the words sank in: it meant, "Not only is this little cripple possessed of powers superior to mine—he can do my job for me without training, without difficulty, and boast about his success..."

"That's hardly a fair thought," he said, not realizing he had said it. "I'm sorry. But it's not, you know."

Clara, who had been listening with puzzlement, interrupted unexpectedly. "You should have seen what it cost him! The pain he must have—"

Clara! The single warning thought cut off her hasty words.

"All right," he said aloud. "May I have silence, please?"

Rudi...

The figure on the bed stirred very slightly. That was all the others could see. Inside his mind, Rudi was saying, "What do you want, you interfering bastard?"

I saved your life, Rudi.

For what? For pain like this? You condemned me to it when you interfered and stopped me doing what I wanted to do.

I know. Howson had said last night to Clara that a projective telepathist could tell a lie convincingly; now he summoned up all his reserves to prove the corollary—that he could equally convincingly tell the truth.

I know, Rudi, I can feel that pain as much as you, you know. I'm fully aware of what I've caused you. Now I have to give you something in return—happiness, maybe, or satisfaction, whatever you want that I can

let you have. Otherwise how would my conscience treat me?

The whole mind was involved in this; behind the verbalised projection, smoothly, automatically in spite of Rudi's suffering, filtered through his own mind, impressed with his own personality.

A feeble flicker of disbelief: *But you're nothing to me. We're strangers; we met by chance and might have been a thousand miles apart today if it hadn't been for what I did.*

Nobody is nothing to one of us. And behind that, because it was too complex to put into words, Howson made himself consciously feel what was usually so much a part of himself that he never gave it a thought—the shared quality of a telepathist's existence, the need and hunger and yearning which were all the ordinary individual's needs and hungers and yearnings a million-fold multiplied, as if in a hall of mirrors by reflections re-doubling and re-doubling themselves away towards infinity.

That was why a telepathist became a peacemaker, or a psychiatrist, or a curative telepathist, or an industrial disputes arbitrator—all *helping* jobs, helping people to be happier or better off or more fulfilled. It was also why he had told splendid glamorous telepathic stories to the deaf-and-dumb girl he now knew as Mary Williams, and why he had been so bitterly disappointed when he learned that his youthful fumbling attempt to give her happiness had turned into a Greek gift.

It was also why (though normal people could never quite accept that fact unless they had been shown by someone such as Howson) there would never be a telepathist who would be antisocial, who would be a master criminal or general of an army. No telepathist could ever have stood in the place of Chaka Zulu and ordered his hordes to ravage a season's journey in the direction he had

cast his spear; no telepathist could ever have ordered his fellow-beings to Belsen; no telepathist could ever have dropped the atomic bomb at Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

It was also the naked truth.

Rudi's eyes flickered open, and he looked at the vacant face masking the keen mind. Last night, when they first met, he had ignored the conventional reaction to Howson's small stature, deformity, unprepossessing appearance—but because on principle he ignored the conventions which demanded the reactions. He was half-Israeli; perhaps his people had a legacy of conventional prejudices enough to last them for eternity—all directed against them. So, by analogy, he would have leaned over backwards to avoid offending a Negro. So do and have long done millions of people; only most of them, if they fail to learn the logic of prejudice, learn the logic of self-interest and therefore conform. Rudi, now, would not.

He yielded; it was easy to yield and go back into his fog of pain. For Howson, it was very hard, but it had to be done—and he had done it very often in the past.

Why did you do it, Rudi?

A complex picture of dissatisfaction with the work he had set himself to do; with the reception it had had; with the inability of other people to understand what he was doing. Add to that; money troubles, because of the stopping of his grant; emotional problems on a personal level—he needed the affection and acceptance of a woman, any woman, but she must understand his needs—he was good-looking and pleasant, but that was not enough to secure him the right person. He had tried man; the last had been cruel. And the mask he had put up to protect himself against the scrutiny of the world had proved his undoing—people who could not penetrate it, and therefore had no idea

of the turmoil of sorrow boiling in his brain, had been tactless, unkind, re-opening old sores unknowingly.

So he had picked up a knife, and thought how much he would like oblivion.

But Howson could see behind the mask, and therefore would not be tactless and unkind; he understood Rudi's needs, and could help and advise him. Money troubles—Howson dismissed them with a sudden gesture of annoyance, vividly pictured in his mind. In the same instant he went straight ahead to the factor which all through Rudi's bitter survey of his reasons for suicide had taken the foremost place: his work.

What work is this.

Chaos, mingled with striving. Behind it all, very deep, was a need to create and bring forth—Howson found it amazingly feminine, much reminiscent of certain urges he had known in the deep unconscious of frustrated single women. From this sprang in unity several consequences; he saw them presented to him all at once, but had to verbalise them in sequence.

Though feminine, this impulse was also essentially human. It had by-products which he at once noticed and dismissed—such as that the reason for the agony in Rudi's creative activity was that his deep unconscious saw it as a parturition, and that brings pain, and that the reason why he chose to attempt suicide by harakiri was because it represented a Caesarian delivery on the cross-reference identity level of his mind.

But Rudi's deep unconscious could only inform the probing, inquisitorial mind why he needed to create at all; it could not explain the nature of the creation and the way in which Rudi was tackling it. Howson drew back, dizzying for a moment as he discovered his own body to be cramped and stiff. No matter he usually worked on a bed, attended by a

nurse and watched over as anxiously as the patient, for he was nearly oblivious of himself when he was probing deeply. Naturally he was uncomfortable here.

"There's too much pain," he told the surgeon shortly. "Would it be safe for him to get a local in the stomach wall?"

Then he focused his physical vision, and found that the nurse had already lifted up the bedclothes and was preparing an injection. He looked blank, and then, struck by a sudden thought, turned to Clara, who stood white-faced holding the bar at the foot of the bed.

She read the question before he could utter it, and nodded. "You... you told me about therapy watchdogs. I've already asked for him to be given an anaesthetic."

Howson felt a deep wave of appreciation and gratitude; he did not check it, but projected it as it stood, and Clara flushed with sudden embarrassment.

How do you feel?

Oh, Gerry—it's magnificent, but it's somehow absolutely terrifying at the same time!

Howson hesitated for a moment, and then, as if confessing a serious error of judgment, he said in words, "You know, I might have been wrong last night. Maybe you won't have to report in and ask to be taught how to use your gift properly."

The nurse and the surgeon exchanged puzzled glances at this sudden illogical dialogue.

"But"—Clara seemed just as astonished—"but *you're* teaching me! You're teaching me all the time!"

The nurse gently touched Rudi's bandaged abdomen; he did not wince or cry out. "The local's taken effect, Dr. Howson," she said quietly.

"Fine."

Rudi!

Yes...? A pure conscious note of interrogation, blended with assent

and willingness to co-operate.

And Howson settled down to find clarity and order in something that was not clear to Rudi himself.

Springing from the fundamental creative urge were the reasons why this urge could not find an outlet in writing, painting, sculpture, or anything else where the creator was divorced from his audience. Rudi could never be satisfied to create something and leave other people, elsewhere, to appreciate it. That same appreciation fed and renewed his desire to create, as an actor feeds on a "good audience" and rises to new interpretative heights.

And yet acting, again, would be inadequate for Rudi, because it was interpretative. So was ballet; so was almost every other form of art in which there was the direct audience contact Rudi craved—although he had been a first-class debater, conjuring up splendid impromptu speeches. (Howson had to sift through a dozen such qualifications and explanations before he arrived at a clear picture of what Rudi actually was trying to do.)

Essentially, though, it was music which attracted him most. And—

And Howson found himself on the top of a dizzying slide, lost his footing, and went headlong skidding and slipping into a vast uncharted jungle of interlocked sensory experiences.

Rudi Allef's mind was almost as far from the normal as was Howson's own, but in a different direction; somehow, Rudi's sense-data cross-referred, interchangeably. Howson had trespassed in minds with a limited sort of audio-vision—those of people to whom musical sounds called up associated memories of colours or pictures—but compared to what went on in Rudi's mind that was puerile.

(Once, long before, Howson had seen a tattered and scratched print of Disney's *Fantasia*; he had enjoyed it, and had wished that there had been

more attempts to combine sound and vision in a similar way. Now he was finding out what the combination could be like on the highest level.)

Like a swimmer struggling in a torrential river, Howson felt wildly for solidity in this roaring stream of memory. Images presented themselves: a voice/velvet/a kitten's claws scratching/purple/ripe fruit—a ship's siren/fog/steel/yellowish-grey/cold/insecurity/sense of loss and emptiness—a common chord of C major struck on a piano/childhood/wood/black and white overlaid with bright gold/security/hate/something burning/tightness about the forehead/shame/stiffness in the wrists/liquidity/roundness...

There was virtually no end to that one. Howson drew back a little and tried again.

He was walking through a forest of ferns a hundred feet high with gigantic animals browsing off their bark; he was rather tired, as if he had walked a long way, and the sun was extremely hot. But he came to a blue river and became an ice-floe bobbing on a gentle current, melting slowly into the water around. He/the water plunged over a precipice; the pain of striking rock after rock in the long descent was somehow satisfying and fulfilling, because he was standing back watching the white spray as he flowed down and there was solidity slowly being worn away as the water eroded the underlying rocks and the spray diffused out with vastness and blackness and far down below a sensation of warmth and redness not seen but imagined (infra-redness?) as though he was on an airless world with a red sun, a giant red sun, crawling over the horizon to turn him into something scuttering and four-legged on an endless black plain which was only a few feet across and around which giants, unheeding, went about their business with bass footsteps and bass voices—

Only all the time he was listening to an orchestra.

Howson felt very tired. Someone was slapping his face gently with a towel dipped in ice-water. He opened his eyes, and found he was still on the chair in the ward.

"Are you all right?" said Clara, looking anxiously over the shoulder of the nurse who was holding the wet towel. "You—you were frightened—?"

Howson waited to reply until he had got used to being back inside his own mind. "How long was I—away?" he said in a hoarse voice.

"It's been nearly three hours," said the woman surgeon, glancing at her watch.

"Less than I thought—still, you were right to pull me back, I suppose." Howson got gingerly to his feet and took a step to ease the pins and needles in his legs. He glanced at Clara.

What did you get?

I don't quite know.... There was a lot of fear.

Your own. Howson frowned. Something was puzzling him. Still, it would come clear soon enough—perhaps. He spoke aloud to the surgeon.

"Thank you for letting me study the case. It's very interesting. I'm afraid I may have put a strain on him—would you check how well he stood it, and let me know how soon you think he'll be able to take full-scale therapy?"

"Are you proposing to handle the case—here?" said the surgeon. She didn't know whether to be flattered that a curative telepathist of such renown should want to work in her hospital, or annoyed that an outsider should intrude on one of her cases. Flattery struggled hard, and won; Howson made gently certain of that.

She checked Rudi thoroughly and swiftly. "Pulse strong," she muttered; "blood-pressure—we-ell, not too bad. Respiration fair..." She

rolled back an eyelid and flashed a torch into the pupil beneath. "Yes, Dr. Howson, he's not suffered from what you did. He should be strong enough for you in—well, at a fair guess, a week or ten days."

Howson felt disappointed; there was something in Rudi's mind which he needed. In any case, he was fascinated by the resources he had discovered there. How to contain himself during the next week—?

Well, that would have to take care of itself.

He and Clara sat in a restaurant near the hospital, spending time over the lengthy conversation and a second cup of coffee. He had been sorting out his memories of Rudi's mind, and putting them up clearly and in order so that she could appreciate his trouble. But the prolonged strain had misted her mind, so they had gone back to words.

"Poor Rudi," Clara said, absently stirring her empty cup. "No wonder he was so frustrated... How could he ever hope to communicate with an audience?"

"Oh, he realizes I think, that no one else shares precisely his associations of one sensation with another. I mean, a telepathist is the only conceivable ideal audience for him. Consciously, he'd be satisfied if he could create—objectively—a passable facsimile of his mental images, to which his listeners could add their own associations. What he can't realize, can't reconcile himself to, is that hardly anyone else in the world can perform such feats of mental association as he can.

"Let's imagine a concrete example. You've mentioned his refusal to co-operate with the university authorities. Presumably he was doing experimental composition?"

Clara nodded. "Some of it was really weird! But the main trouble was that he enlisted Jay Horne's sup-

port—you remember meeting Jay? Of course you do—anyway, he was as they said 'interfering' with Jay's own work, which is rather more appreciated and more readily accessible, because he spent so much time helping Rudi out. At least, so I've heard from Charma, Horne—I've known her longer than Jay. Sorry—go on."

"Why apologize? Rudi produces an experimental work; the logic behind it is probably that of his own associations with the sounds it involves. He would be satisfied with *some* comprehension on the part of the listener; instead, his audience listens only for the sake of the sounds themselves, thus missing the whole point of the work. His hopes dwindle; he gets more and more helpless even when he deliberately restricts the range of associations on which he bases his music, and as he approaches nearer to the conventional, he more and more feels that he is drifting away from what he wants—more: needs—to do.

"If he enlists Jay's help, it's because he has restricted himself almost to the barest minimum. Discarding all the other sensory cross-references he himself experiences, he thinks he might as well convey plain images of colour and movement if all else fails. Right? The description he gave me of Jay's work made me feel that he doesn't regard it too highly."

"He does, though. He doesn't regard Jay himself too highly, and that's quite a different matter."

"I see," Howson mused. "But the difficulty which one always runs up against in every attempt to integrate music and visual impressions is that it's expensive, complicated and generally unsatisfactory. What one needs is an instrument as simple and versatile as a piano, which combines the resources of a colour-organ with those of an unlimited film library."

Clara stared at him. "Do you know,

those are almost exactly the words Charma once used to me when things were going badly between Rudi and Jay?"

"Not surprising. Probably they were the ones Rudi himself used." Howson stared into space. "Clara, let's go and call on the Hornes. There are things I ought to know before I start on Rudi's therapy."

"You said," Clara reminded him timidly, "that you were on holiday...?"

"A man at Ulan Bator hospital asked me why I didn't use my talents for my own enjoyment," said Howson with a hint of bitterness. "So that's just what I'm proposing to do. I can't deny that I look forward to seeing Rudi Allef thank me for what I've done for him. Only I've got to find something I can do for him. Let's go."

They went; and found Charma and Jay at home, in a small apartment near the university. Plainer than ever in a once-red blouse and house-shorts, Charma was attempting to cope with the housework and Jay's furious complaints that she was disturbing a whole lot of his necessary equipment at the same time; Howson could sense the raised tempers from outside the door. However, he knocked and they entered, and the row dissolved into greetings.

When they had cleared a couple of chairs and Charma had conjured a pot of coffee out of the wrecked-looking kitchenette, Howson realized that he could detect a harmony of attitudes between the couple, which underlay and supported their superficial eternal disagreement. It rather took him aback, but evidently they had a thoroughly workable arrangement...

He repressed the desire to probe further and stated the purpose of their visit. It wasn't until he had almost finished that he realized neither Jay nor Charma knew who he really

was. He explained, wondering what the reaction would be.

"Good—*grief!*" said Jay, his mild blue eyes growing round with astonishment. "Talk about angels unawares! When I think where poor old Rudi would be now, if it hadn't been for you—! Thanks, Dr. Howson. I think that man is going places, in spite of the fact that he gets on my nerves."

"Call me Gerry," said Howson, relieved beyond measure. "Anyway—I was hoping to see something of what Rudi had been doing."

"*That's* easy enough. Charma honey, suppose you clear the piano and get out that thing we were looking at yesterday, and I'll turn on the gadgets."

At one side of the small, crowded room, there stood the piano; Howson hadn't noticed it for the tangle of electrical and other equipment overhanging it. When Charma cleared it off, he saw it was not quite an ordinary piano: it had two additional keyboards, one belonging to an organ-simulator and the other to a battery of strips of tape each with a separate playing head.

"That's for special effects," explained Jay as he went from point to point in the room turning switches. "Rudi is hell on that kind of thing. Now here's my own particular pet." And he took the wooden lid off a large glass box like an aquarium, at the bottom of which a pool of luminescent fluid gleamed faintly. A row of coloured lights shone down each side of the tank.

"Lights down," said Jay as he took his place at a haywire panel of electrical controls. There was darkness as Charma hauled the curtains across the window, in which the green of the luminescent liquid shone eerily.

"Watch the tank," said Jay briefly. "Okay, honey—one, two three—"

A succession of irregular intervals down the keyboard, ending in a swell-

ing imitation of a peal of bells from one of the special keys, and shapes began to form in the glass tank: multi-coloured, responding vaguely and slowly to the music. Within a few seconds they were growing definite, and hard square forms followed hard square chords.

Watching intently, Howson thought he could see a vague, distorted resemblance to certain things he had seen in Rudi's mind, but how hollow, how rudimentary this makeshift was compared to the vivid, far-reaching volumes of association he had seen there!

The music stopped abruptly. "That's as far as we got with that one," said Jay coolly. "Open the curtains, there's a dear."

And as Charma flung them wide, he looked at Howson. He raised an inquiring eyebrow.

"It's clever," said Howson. "But it's rather shallow."

Jay looked delighted. "Precisely what I've been saying. I've gone along with almost everything Rudi has asked me to do, because as I said I think he's going places. But I have to admit that he's taken up a hell of a lot of my time, and we don't seem to be very happy collaborators. If you'll come into the other room, I'll show you what I've been doing myself."

In the other room there were dozens of the glass tanks ranged on shelves, some of them dusty, all of them dark and uninteresting. Jay went to an electric point and plugged in a wandering lead.

"This is my latest," he said, and connected the lead to a socket beneath one of the larger glass tanks. A faint light came on; after a pause, it brightened, and a stream of opalescent bubbles began to work their way through the tank in a switchback formation. Shafts of green, yellow and blue shifted through the tank in an irregular

series of graceful loops; then, suddenly, a square and uncompromising formation in bright red loomed up from a point till it almost filled the side of the tank nearest to the watchers. It vanished; the graceful swerving curves continued.

"It never repeats itself," said Jay thoughtfully. "It's like a kaleidoscope—in fact, I suppose that's what it most closely resembles."

"It's much more successful than what you've been doing with Rudi," said Howson. "But equally it's more limited."

Jay connected another of the tanks; this one was darker, dark red, midnight blue and purple shot with heavy gold and rare flashes of white. Watching it, he nodded. "And yet this is what I'm trying to do," he said. "I'm after something quite simple: I just want to convey movement and colour in a—well, in a beautiful combination. Or an ugly one, come to that. Like this!" He snapped a switch, and a third tank lit—hesitantly moving, abrupt in its changes of colour, the whole pattern dissolving frequently into muddy brown and a sickly olive-grey.

"But you see," Jay continued, "I know what I'm after. Sometimes I get the impression Rudi didn't. I mean, I'd follow his instructions to the letter, spending hours over a single effect, and then have him go through the roof because it wasn't quite what he wanted."

"I'm not surprised," said Howson thoughtfully. "You see, Rudi's sensory impressions are so completely interlocked I doubt if he could possibly visualize anything straightforwardly. He hears a note struck on your piano, and he immediately links it up with—oh, let's say the taste and texture of a slice of bread, the colour of a stormy sky, and the smell of stagnant water, together with a bodily sensation of anxiety and pins-and-needles in the left arm. All those in-

terlock with still other ideas—result, chaos! He probably can't single out the most important items; he can't separate the colour of the sky from the colour of the greenish weed on the water or the bread-colour of the bread. He mingles them all in his mind, but no one else could possibly take them all in simultaneously and achieve the same associations and overtones that he gets."

"Except you," said Clara.

"Yes," said Howson thoughtfully. "Except me...or another telepath. Jay, what are the resources of that thing of yours in the room where we were just now?"

"That's hard to say," Jay answered. "Aside from the obvious limits imposed by the speed of response—and its small size, of course—pretty well limitless. We've worked on it on and off for more than a year now."

"Could you spare a little time to work on it further?" Howson noted the momentary hesitation with which Jay responded, and added quickly, "It's for Rudi."

"Okay," said Jay. "What exactly do you want?"

"Well... Look, I agree with you that Rudi is going places. His ability to correlate and cross-refer sensory data means that he could, given the right opportunity, create his new art-form. Given a life-time at it, and public interest, he could call on everything he needs to convey the totality of impressions he's after. I mean, he could eventually obtain equipment to integrate sight, sound, smell, maybe even more complex impressions. What he needs now is *hope*. And I have an idea how we might give him that."

Rudi!

Howson felt the mind shrink a little and then remember. The healing was progressing well; Howson felt a stir of envy at the normality of Rudi's bodily functions compared with his own. He could never have stood an

injury a tenth as bad as that which the younger man had sustained and would recover from.

They had moved Rudi into a private sound-proof room, and now they were all here: Jay, Charma and Clara, with a nurse standing by. Howson renewed his approach gently.

Rudi, think of your music.

As if floodgates had been opened, a wave of imagined sound poured into Rudi's aching consciousness; Howson fought to channel and control it. He gained the minimal amount he needed, and nodded to Clara.

The tank—which had taken four men to bring it into the ward—lit; Clara, a strained look on her face, flashed the controls, and Howson suggested that Rudi open his eyes. He did; he saw—

Jay and Charma, of course, could not hear the music that pulsed and raged in Rudi's mind. But Howson could, and so could Clara, and that was what mattered.

They had spent the week experimenting, improving, and training: now the tank could respond to virtually anything, and they had jury-rigged new controls until it was as versatile and essentially as simple as a theremin. And Clara—

Howson had wondered sometimes in the course of the past week whether it was just that she was a ready subject, or that he himself should have been an instructor of telepathy, for she was reading Rudi's fantastic mental projections, sifting them out and extracting the essentials, and converting them into visual images, as fast as Rudi himself could think them.

Awed amazement grew plain on Rudi's face as he watched the tank. Jay and Charma, who could not hear the music to which Clara was responding, were almost as startled. And Howson felt purely and simply overjoyed.

Mountains grew in the tank, distorted as if looked at from below, purple-blue and overpowering; mists gathered round their peaks, and an avalanche thundered into a valley surrounded by white sprays of snow, as a distant and melancholy horn theme dissolved in Rudi's mind into a cataclysm of orchestral sounds and a hundred un-musical noises. The tank blurred; a wisp of smoke rose from a connection leading to it, and Jay leapt forward with an exclamation.

It was over.

Hoping that the disappointment had not outweighed the pleasure in Rudi's mind, Howson turned to the bed. His hope was fulfilled; Rudi was struggling to sit up, his face radiant with delight.

Howson cut across his incoherent babble of thanks with a calming thought. "You don't need to thank me," he said with a twisted smile. "I can tell easily enough that you're grateful. You were stupid to think of giving up when there was success within your grasp, weren't you?"

"But it wasn't," said Rudi. "It was within yours! If it hadn't been for you—! And Clara, of course, But—but damnation, this isn't success, if I have to rely on you to help me."

"Rely on me." Howson was genuinely astonished. "Oh, of course! I suppose you think I was projecting your images to Clara." Succinctly he explained what had actually happened. Relief grew plain in Rudi's face, but soon enough a further thought struck him.

"But—Clara, how do you feel about this? You won't want to go on being an interpreter for me, surely."

"I won't have to. Gerry says that when people get to know about what we two can do together, it will excite them enough for you to be given orchestras to work with. Then all you need to do is to learn to control

this thing—we've worked out such a simple way of running it that even I can manage it now. Only you'll be able to have bigger and better gadgets—"

She looked appealingly at Howson, who obliged by projecting the future he envisaged for Rudi's work directly into his mind.

There was a hall—vast; in darkness. At the far end lights glowed over music stands, and there was rustling and tuning up to be heard. Stillness: broken by the opening bars of Rudi's composition. Darkness: interrupted by the creation in a huge counterpart of Jay's yard-square tank of vivid, fluid, pictorial, corresponding images. The response in the audience could be felt, grew tangible in the air, and in answer the images fed on the appreciation.

He finished, and found Rudi with his eyes closed and his hands clasped together on the coverlet. Howson got to his feet and beckoned his companions; stealthily they crept from the room, leaving Rudi with the vision of his ambition fulfilled.

Later they sat in Jay and Charma's apartment drinking wine in celebration of their success. "You—you didn't exaggerate at all, did you, Gerry?" Clara asked timidly when they had toasted him half a dozen times.

"Not greatly. Oh, perhaps a little—I mean, the sort of world-wide appreciation I promised him may take twenty years to come. But it damned well should come; Rudi has a gift in its way as unusual as yours or mine. I'm sorry, you two," he added to Jay and Charma.

Jay shrugged. "We should worry. I'd not deny I'd like to have something special, as you two have—but hell, you must have had a lot to put up with in exchange. I think I shall be a sort of success in my own way, and I doubt if I'll have the heart-aches you will have to stand."

"Probably not," said Howson thoughtfully. "You know, I've been giving the matter a little consideration, and I think I could open up a market for as many of your fluid mobiles as you care to build. They have a certain restful fascination about them which I like... Suppose I was to recommend you to the director of my hospital, and got him interested in the idea of trying them in place of the standard mobiles and tanks of tropical fish we use in the mental wards, you wouldn't think that was demeaning to your art, would you?" Jay, staring, "What do you think I make myself out to be—another Michelangelo or something? I'm a sort of glorified interior decorator."

"And even if he did make himself out to be a genius," said Charma with mock grimness, "I'd soon see he was cured of the idea. Thanks a million, Gerry—that'll take us off the bread-line!"

Then she looked directly at Howson. "What about you?"

"What about me? Well... Rudi, so to speak, has given his first public performance"—Howson grinned to himself; he was looking forward to this moment, and had had trouble containing himself so long already—"so I think maybe I might now give mine."

He reached out gently with his mind, and began to tell a story—as he had told a story to Mary Williams, so long ago.

How could he have been so blind? How could he have failed to realize that here, under his nose, was the way in which he could use his gift not only for his own but for others' enjoyment?

So he conjured up a simple fantasy, a fairy-tale, with sights, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, emotions—all drawn from the vast store of unreal and real memories with which his intimate knowledge of so many other minds than his own had armed

him. It was an experiment only, of course—a trial run. One day there would be something more. But for now, this was enough.

His audience came slowly back to reality, their eyes shining, and he knew he had won.

And now—?

Maybe a trip around the world, to add a knowledge of reality to his knowledge of people's dreams and nightmares and imaginings, drawing here a little and there a little from the consciousness of Asians, Europeans, Americans, Australasians... The whole world suddenly lay open to him.

As usual, the stadium had been packed to capacity. The very rarity of the occasions on which Gerald Howson invited people to hear him "thinking aloud" ensured that all available accommodation went as soon as it was advertised—he never allowed it to conflict with his work at the Ulan Bator hospital. But whenever he got the opportunity, he would notify some city or town, and people would travel a thousand miles if they could manage it. It was amazing how his reputation had grown in two years.

Now they were wistfully filing from the stadium, and Howson was receiving—and largely ignoring—his inevitable wave of congratulations from important listeners. As always, he had to deny that he must be feeling tired after his efforts—possibly he should take to adding as a coda to the performance the fact that he did this at least in part to refresh himself after a period of work. It was perfectly true—he never felt so un-weary or so happy as after one of these rare public appearances.

Tonight he had skipped from idea to idea, now telling his audience of his work, now telling them of the thoughts of a crippled dwarf, now those of a normal happy person, in

India, in Venezuela, in Italy, in many other places where he had garnered his material. It was by now a virtuoso achievement—often he improvised on the reactions of the members of the audience, leaving those who were lonely and unhappy proud to have been noticed and singled out.

"Gerry," said Pandit Singh softly through the babble of congratulation which welled from the people surrounding him. "Gerry, there's someone here whom you ought to see."

Hullo, Rudi—I knew you were there. Just give me time to get rid of these so-and-so's!

A quiet suggestion that the uninvited intruders should take their leave, and he was free to come and shake Rudi's hand. Clara was with him, and he greeted her affectionately.

How are you?

Fine! You'll be seeing a lot of me from now on—I start training as a therapy watchdog in Ulan Bator next month.

Delight!

"Hullo, Gerry," said Rudi, unaware of this mental exchange. He seemed almost embarrassed. "You were wonderful."

"I know," said Howson, smiling; Rudi could hardly recognize him as the same man, so greatly had he grown in self-assurance. "When are you going to join me in show business?"

"I'm giving my first performance in a few weeks. Mainly, I came to invite you and make sure you can be there. If you can't, I'll postpone it till you can."

"Congratulations; you can be sure I'll come. My work permitting."

Rudi looked at Pandit Singh standing on his left; a slight flush coloured his cheekbones. "Gerry—I've been talking with Dr. Singh here, about you, and I've been finding out quite a lot about your—uh—about your disability. I don't know much

about either medicine or telepathy, but as I understand it, the trouble is that some part of your brain which ought to look after the—well, the repair and upkeep of your body—it's been sacrificed to your telepathic organ."

"Roughly," said Howson; he searched Rudi's face keenly, but refrained from forestalling his next words by intruding on his mind.

"Well—what I was thinking was...you can transfer practically anything else from another person's mind to your own—couldn't you sort of borrow the necessary part of my mind to make up for what you haven't got." The last part came in a rush, and Rudi looked at once hopeful and excited. "You see, I owe you everything, including my life, and I'd like to do something equally valuable in return—"

Howson shut his eyes; the world seemed to be spinning around him. Pandit Singh spoke up into the gap.

"I've talked it over with Mr. Allef," he said smoothly, "and I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be done. It would, of course, mean that your bodily appearance would be something rather like his, but it would also mean that we could have you operated on with an excellent chance of successful healing. It might even mean you growing in height. I've explained all the consequences to Mr. Allef, and told him it would mean lying in a hospital bed for as long as was required, unable to do anything and suffering as much as if he himself had been operated on—"

"And I still insist on being allowed to do it," said Rudi firmly.

Howson knew he could do nothing else but accept—but even as he uttered the grateful words, he felt that it was unnecessary, because in the moment of Rudi making the offer, he, Gerald Howson, had become a whole man.

some have entertained angels

by LELAND and RITA PUTTCAMP

"Let brotherly love continue.

*"Be not forgetful to entertain
strangers; for thereby some have en-
tertained angels unaware."*

HEBREWS, 13; 1,2

WE'RE SHOOTING the moon, spending millions of dollars on costly fireworks, preparing man for space travel by making him live closeted with himself for days, and no one is laughing. That's *Science*.

Before 1930, there were ABSOLUTELY only eight planets. That was *Science*, too.

"The speed of the ship was 250,000 mph at 40,000 feet and it was capable of a 500,000 mph speed outside Earth's atmosphere." This isn't *Science*; this is information given Detroit Lee Childers by men from the Titanic solar system.

The time has come for old conclusions drawn by out-dated concluders with rigid minds and fallible tools to be over-hauled.

The only conclusions finite man has the power to draw from what he learns about infinite space are based on very limited experience. Unfortunately, finite man is circumscribed by an arrogance which leaves the Almighty Creator shaking his head in exasperation at worshippers who insist on limiting Him and His creativeness, too.

Conclusion-happy *Science* eats crow periodically. Whereas it arrogantly directs the learning of each generation, it finds it difficult to do any learning itself. The wholesome attitude, *Could be*, or *What if*, gets lost in the frenzy of *Must be* or *No ifs*, just to uphold professional reputations.

But look at some of the thinking and reports that *Science* chooses to damn either by ignoring or by scorning.

At a recent convention in Detroit, attended by several hundreds of persons who have seen flying saucers,

the Reverend John Brinson of Kalamazoo, Michigan, a well-spoken, literate man in his mid-forties, said:

"Truth is the mechanics of life. There is nothing wrong with the signal coming from God but much wrong with the instrument *so fearfully and wonderfully made* which is trying to pick it up."

What then, asks Reverend Brinson, was Elijah's chariot of fire? (See II KINGS 2:11)

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that behold, a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, came and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Horses and chariots in Elijah's time were the epitome in transportation. Most travelers walked. Camels and donkeys were used then, as they are now, for draft animals. Only the noble, the rich, or the warring used chariots.

If the chariot of fire was, as Brinson believes it could have been, a flying saucer, an inter-planetary vehicle, an unidentified flying object, it would be most likely for the writer to call it a chariot.

The star of Bethlehem (See MATT. 2:9) and the annunciatory angels who appeared to the shepherds (See LUKE 2: 8-14) could have been of this same source. The star, which led the wise men, has never been seen again. And, if you want to follow a little deeper, who were the wise men? How did they know the star was leading them to "him who is born King of the Jews?" The angels? Let your imagination range. If von Braun can get man into space, perhaps the Brinsons of this world will show him how to behave when he gets there.

Ezekiel's wheels are interesting in this respect, too. (See EZEKIEL 1:13-21)

"As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round

about them four."

Many observers of flying saucers have seen *four* portholes in the extra-terrestrial vehicles.

One of the more interesting Biblical references the Reverend Mr. Brinson mentioned was Saint Paul's admonition in his letter to the Hebrews:

"Let brotherly love continue.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels (messengers) unaware."

Another instance was the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane when the servant of the high priest lost his ear to the sword of one of the followers, and Christ, restoring the ear, said:

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

A Roman legion was from 3000 to 6000 soldiers. Angels? Who knows? Extra-terrestrial, that's all we really know about them.

The promise of Saint Paul in I THESSALONIANS 4:17 is even more interesting in relation to flying saucers, or inter-planetary vehicles.

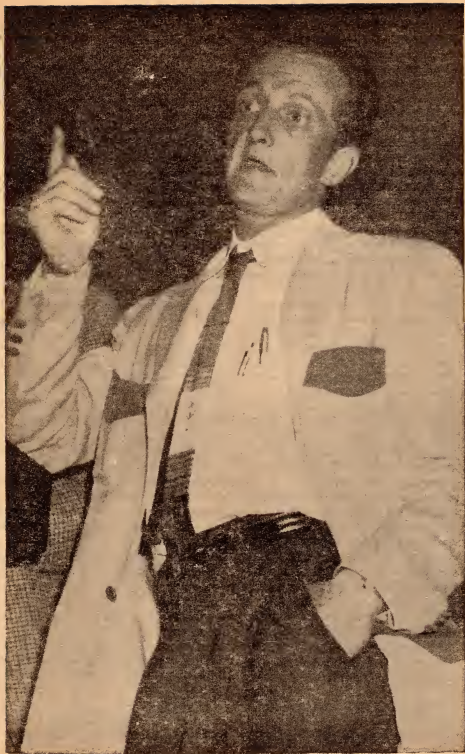
"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Of course, this is speculation. It hasn't happened yet. What happened to Lee Childers of Detroit has happened. Childers could be lying, of course; or he may be a "visionary," which is a more courteous way of saying, "You're nutty as a fruit cake." Or he could, as he says, be the recipient of a visit so dramatic.

Childers is a General Baking Company employee. He was on his way home from work one August morning between two and three o'clock. He was crossing a viaduct on Livernois Avenue when his engine died.

He was poking around under the





hood when someone called to him from across the street. Down on the embankment, he saw the large saucer with several people standing around it. Their uniforms and hair matched in color, and their speech was like music.

Childers went over and talked to the visitors. After having been girdled first with a belt with a large buckle said to have the property of protecting him from the ship's radiation, he was taken aboard the ship, which was between 35 and 40 feet in diameter.

The speed of the ship was 250,000 mph at 40,000 feet, and it was capable of a 500,000 mph speed outside Earth's atmosphere, Childers was told.

The visitors were on a mission to make physical contact with the Earth people because they are worried about the danger of atomic wars affecting the firmament, and because Earth people have faltered in their faith in the Almighty Creator.

(If this sounds like science fiction to you, I give you TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, Jules Verne, 1869; and the voyage of the *Nautilus*, 1958. Fiction can forerun fact, but fact comes.)

A young Mexican landholder "entertained angels". The young man had been educated as an engineer but had to be called home to manage the several thousand acres of the family lands. He was working with some hired workmen in a field when he was approached by two men who he thought were American pilots flying an experimental craft which had landed not far away.

In the best *hidalgo* manner, he took the two guests to his mother who offered them alcoholic refreshment, which they refused. During dinner, they told the Mexican that they were from Venus, and they asked him to go with them for a visit. He was in the midst of a busy season and couldn't

be gone long, but he went.

After months of investigation, the editor of a Mexico City newspaper was convinced that the landowner was telling the truth and devoted four Sundays to telling the story of the man's remarkable extra-terrestrial adventure.

George Adamski, Valley Center, California, who has told of similar contacts with men from Mars, Venus, and Jupiter in his books, *Flying Saucers Have Landed* and *Inside the Space Ships*, went to Mexico to talk to the young man.

While attending a religious celebration, Adamski sighted two flying saucers hovering about 1000 feet above the crowd. The next day, word came from across the lake that the visitors had landed near another cathedral with fewer tourists and had gone into the church to speak to the worshippers there.

According to Mr. Adamski, this is not unusual for the Mexican Indians to be so visited; they are not excited by these visits, but that they do hold them sacred and try to keep them secret.

Mr. Adamski showed some amateur color movies in which he showed a small "recording disc" darting from side to side across the jungle road. The small disc, about 12 inches across, finally sailed up into the air and seemed to catch in a tree.... except that discernible behind and beyond the tree was a flying saucer tilted on its edge, looming darker blue against the blue sky.

Undoubtedly, these movies could be faked. What Hollywood, which is convenient to Valley Center, can do, George Adamski could do, too. To accept the movie as valid means that one must first accept George Adamski as valid.

Whatever George Adamski is.... philosopher, visionary, teacher, valid entrepreneur for the inter-planetary Brothers of whom he writes, he does



not seem to be an actor. He misses too many chances to allow his own strong personality to assert itself.

Although he is very articulate, he neither argues nor presents arguments, which is difficult to do when dealing with so controversial a subject. He is friendly, but he does not try to be persuasive. He knows what he knows and you can take it or leave it, and God bless you either way.

Through his contacts with visitors from Venus, Mars, and Jupiter, information comes that other-planetary scientists are interested in Earth because it is "going through the tilt", the like of which happened to Earth first about 26,000 years ago. More recently, Mercury was tilted 4000 years ago; and Venus 2000 years ago.

Adamski reasons that the 2000 year space in the 26,000 year cycle may only seem to be broken; that not too long ago there were only seven planets and that it is reasonable to assume there might possibly be other planets as yet undiscovered by our inadequate instruments. Since all the suns are said to have twelve planets and the twelve planets and the sun would make up the 26,000 year cycle at 2000 years each, some of our scientists might start looking. With their minds open, of course.

Already, evidences of this "tilt" are being felt in the warming of the Arctic Ocean. (See "The Coming Ice Age", *READER'S DIGEST*, Nov. 1958.) That the pole seems once to have been in the middle of the Pacific Ocean where there was no land to freeze and has been shifted to land may be another evidence.

Adamski says, the flying saucer is not so much a mechanical device as a philosophy which will affect and is affecting all phases of our civilization. People are alerted in spite of themselves. Even the skeptics sit on the sidelines waiting the next development. It is necessary that we all stay with feet solid on the ground and work up from there.

Shooting at the moon, that's Science.

Assuming that a mighty Creator stopped with making one imperfect, divided, and warring planet fit for habitation by man...that's arrogance.

Assuming we can hit the moon, that's vision.

Assuming that man can travel in space, that's dangerous. Unless you KNOW, of course, that it has been done, is being done, that someone else can do it.





ILLUSTRATIONS:

Page 95 — Lee Childers, of Detroit

94 — George Adamski

97 — Audience at lecture in midwest. Note expression on some faces.

99 — Reverend John Brinson (see page 93).

the RED SILK SCARF

by **RANJEE SHAHANI**

BEING a skeptic by temperament and having been in the diplomatic service (a tough profession), I am not easily gullible. But the following experience did come my way; I am utterly unable to explain it; all that I can say is that it is true. Listen.

London. 1940. The war had begun in real earnest.

While the nocturnal serenade a la Hitler was becoming more and more frenzied, I had to visit a hush-hush factory somewhere in England to deliver there a talk on "The Spirit of India". When I arrived at the railway station, which was draped in darkness, I was met by a military man who flashed a torch in my face, somehow recognised me, dumped my suitcase in the back seat of the car, and drove me towards my destination. He did not speak much; in fact, he expressed himself merely in grunts. He seemed to be a character out of one of Kipling's novels—a strong, silent man.

After we had done ten or twelve

miles, we stopped in a virtual wilderness. No human habitations; no sign of life; the dun-coloured fields stretched as far as the eye could see.

"What is the idea of halting here?" I asked.

The man vouchsafed me no answer; he lighted a cigarette and went on puffing at it contentedly. I was vexed but could do nothing about it. I climbed out of the car and watched the neutral English sky, where no sun was to be found but a layer after layer of white clouds. It was bitterly cold, and, though I had heavy fur gloves on, my hands, especially the tips of my fingers, felt numb and painful.

I was sorry to have accepted this lecture tour, but then there was no way out of it now. The British Ministry of Information packed me off to places where they thought I could do most good by my words.

While I stood shivering, a black speck appeared on the rim of the horizon; it grew bigger and bigger as it

drew near, and soon it proved to be a landau pulled by two bay horses. I was transferred to it, and the journey commenced again. This vehicle, I must say, was a ramshackle affair, but, like the English taxis, very comfortable. I sank into its depths, and relaxed.

The sun had now come up, but looked pale, almost cool; it threw a weird light on the world—greenish blue with streaks of silver in it. It looked as though I had strayed into a younger and fresher age. But I was too tired, and soon fell asleep.

Suddenly I received a violent jolt, and woke up with a start. We were now moving on uneven ground, and here and there appeared Nissen huts. I pulled down the window and looked out. A girl in a red scarf waved to us frantically. We stopped. What did she want? A lift. We obliged. She jumped in and stayed in a corner, looking so scared that I did not have the heart to engage her in conversation.

There is not the least doubt that she was most attractive. She had a mass of golden hair, large violet eyes, a small upturned nose, and lips such as Mona Lisa possessed. The brooch she was wearing caught my attention, for it was of a most unusual design and workmanship; it represented a lotus encrusted with diamonds and rubies. It sparkled like a meteor.

We were now approaching the massive gates of a huge factory, whose chimneys belched forth smoke and whose noise was like the thunder of a near-by sea. I didn't hear what the girl said, but I gathered that she wished to be put down at this spot. Her wish was complied with, and she thanked me more with her eyes than with words. Soon she disappeared from view; she was running, as though in a hurry to reach somewhere.

The carriage now drew up to the front steps of the factory, and, as I was about to get down, I noticed the

red silk scarf on the seat beside me. I did not know what to do with it, so, without examining it, I thrust it into my overcoat pocket. I was conscious of a faint odour of jasmine.

Just then the manager of this enormous undertaking, which prepared, as I learned later, deadly poison gas, came to receive me. He told me straightway that it was unnecessary for me to harangue for an hour to earn my fee; I could talk for fifteen minutes to the factory hands and spend the rest of the time with him. He promised me, for lunch, his best sherry and a real good steak. In those grim days it was my fate to travel from one part of England to another, doing nothing but yap, yap, yap. Here was a change, and, frail mortal that I was, I welcomed it. In any case, it seemed to me odd to address a thousand or so men who were masticating their food and exchanging gossip. The clatter of the knives and forks was such that, despite the aid of a microphone, I couldn't hear myself. My sentences issued from my mouth, hung trembling in the huge hall for a moment, and then dropped like pebbles in a deep well.

However, everything went without a hitch. It was still early when I finished my meal. My host, the manager, told me that as I had a few hours to spare before making the return journey, it would be interesting for me to see the neighbouring town which had an old-world atmosphere all its own.

I liked the idea and drove over to the ancient bourg that had been suggested to me. We stopped near a tavern called the Seven Sisters, had a quick one, the driver and I, and talked a little about this and that. "Itler is giving us loads of trouble," said my companion, "but don't you worry; we'll soon lick him and hang him on the tallest tree in our country."

I smiled grimly, for, just then, we were on the run. The bombers of Goering plastered England with ex-

plosives even during the day time.

However, getting the man another mug of beer, I strolled out, promising to return soon. The very first place that attracted my attention was an antique bookshop. I entered it. There was no one in it; the very air seemed redolent of old morocco. As I turned to inspect some tomes, I caught sight of a picture in a corner. It was partially concealed by books, but the face could be seen fairly distinctly.

I was taken aback. Well, here was the girl who had been sitting with me in the carriage earlier in the day. Now, I said to myself, I can return her the scarf, or have it sent on to her.

As I gazed at her portrait—surely the work of some master—she seemed even more beautiful than I had taken her to be. The eyes were wonderful, spell-binding as the stars, and the lips were half-honey, half-poison. Who was she? I was curious to know.

"Ah, sir, you are admiring our masterpiece," said a voice which seemed to come from the caverns of the earth.

I looked round. In front of me a small man stood immovable, not so much seeing me as looking through me. His white beard, framing a pallid face of classical purity, covered half his own length, and his clothes, of a strange cut, hung loosely on his limbs. He was leaning on a stick, as though he suffered from gout or some such ailment.

"The most famous fatal beauty of these parts, sir," I heard. "Set the heart of many a gallant on fire."

"You speak in the past tense. Why?"

"Well, I have reason to; she died in 1823."

"Really!"

"Are you challenging my knowledge, sir?" The man's voice was rising; he spoke like a foghorn.

"I am merely seeking information. Who is she?"

"Lady Caroline. Many adored her,

but she fell in love with a Hindu. Her father, an irate nabob, hearing of this unnatural affection, had the lover waylaid and slain. When she went to the rendezvous, she found her dearest one dead. She took off her scarf and dipped it in his blood, and always wore it round her neck. She never married; she never spoke to anyone again; she just pined away. A sad, bad story."

"Indeed. You seem to tell it well."

"I have always had a soft corner in my heart for her; she was my great-grand aunt. I have inherited some of her belongings."

"Who painted her picture?"

"Some French master. If I knew who he was, I would be well off again."

"How much are you demanding for the portrait?"

"Two thousand guineas."

"May I have a proper look at it?"

"Certainly!" He brought it out for me, dusted it reverently, and put it under a powerful light.

"It's she, it's she!" I cried. "The same black dress, the same red silk scarf, the same brooch shaped like a lotus, and the same wondering violet eyes."

"What are you talking about?"

I told him of my encounter in the morning.

He laughed outright. "You must be dreaming or suffering from hallucinations. How could you have met someone who passed away more than a hundred years ago?"

Probably I have made a mistake, I said to myself; a certain type of English beauty is recurrent. I was about to turn away when I thought of the scarf. I produced it and showed it to the man before me.

He examined it and then grew pale as death. "Why," he murmured, "it has dull blood spots on it and a touch of her famed perfume. And this is the half! Wait a minute..."

He came back, carrying a casket, in

which lay folded the half of a red silk scarf. He put it alongside the scarf I had given him. The two were identical, equal pieces of one whole.

"I know why she appeared to you," he said at last, rising as from a trance. "Her lover died unshriven, and she wants you, a fellow Hindu, to have prayers said for him. Will you do it?" His tone had changed, and he spoke almost in a begging voice. "Maybe she too had become a Hindu. Who knows? Take these two halves of the

scarf and do with them what you think fit."

I left the shop, carrying the casket. Some years later, when I was in Benares, the holiest of Hindu cities, I handed the sad relic to a Brahmin who, having performed certain ceremonies over it, set it floating on the Ganges. It bobbed up and down for a while, and then was carried away by the swift current.

I had done my duty. I hope the tragic lovers are now at peace.

AGAIN AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

The stereotype, and it is a stereotype, of the knife-wielding, dope-pushing Porto Rican teenager, has received seeming confirmation these recent weeks in the wave of teenage violence—the wave of senseless giggling violence—which has erupted here in New York.

There is need for sober community leadership at this stage—*not* to murder pious Freudian exorcisms—but to bring out and to bring out repeatedly the fact that these youngsters (as Ed Sullivan, Jackie Robinson and others have pointed out) are no more representative of their community than *any* criminal, old or young, is representative of his social or ethnic group.

This urge to violence, this urge to senseless violence, respects no social barriers and ignores, in actuality, no section of the community. This is what makes it the more frightening, that you cannot, if you are honest, draw four lines and say that within these is the centrum of the disease.... This disease—and it is just that which is gripping us by the throat—can hit Park Avenue and "Spanish Harlem" and "Hell's Kitchen" with equal and dreadful impartiality!

What can be done?

Try to stop the tabloid glorification of these young hoodlums whose sole moments of glory in their young and senseless and empty lives come when they stare out at you—blank-faced or snarling—from the pages of your favorite tabloid....

Strengthen our courts. Give them the authority to deal with these youngsters as they should be dealt with.

And strengthen our police! Give them, too, the authority to cope *adequately* with the situation!

life and death of a ROBOT

by ROBERT ANDREA

THE ROBOT walked along the gray sidewalk, pausing now and then to check a house number. He was tall and stately looking. His shiny metal frame had a just-out-of-the-factory appearance.

As he continued walking, a strong wind stirred some dust in the street's gutter to his right. The dust gathered into a miniature tornado that whirled across the sidewalk and blew into the robot's metal ears, electronic eyes, and flat, oblong mouth. The robot immediately activated his cleaning mechanism. In a few seconds the dust that had entered his frame was blown out.

After going a bit further, the robot saw the number 225 over the door of a white, one-story wooden dwelling. He turned off the sidewalk and walked around the house until he reached the back door. He rang the doorbell and stood waiting.

Soon a plump, red-haired woman opened the door. She had pale skin

and dark circles under her eyes. She looked at the robot and said, "Oh, you must be the robot my husband ordered."

"Yes, madam," the robot answered, in a deep, slightly rasping tone.

The woman fluttered her eyelids a few times. "Uh—come in," she said finally.

The robot entered the house. "I am prepared to begin work immediately, madam," he said. "Is there anything you wish done at this time?"

"I—I've never had a robot before. Is it true that you can do all the housework and cooking and cleaning?"

"That is quite correct, madam."

"Well, the dishes need washing, and supper needs to be started. Are you sure you can cook?"

"Quite certain, madam." The robot moved to the kitchen sink and started washing the dishes. The woman watched him for a while. When she saw that he knew what to do she left

the kitchen and went to the living room to watch television.

About an hour later a young boy entered the house. He was freckle-faced, with large frog-like eyes and reddish-brown hair. He set his school books down on the kitchen table and gazed wonderingly at the robot. "Gee," he said, "a real robot!"

The woman started in from the living room, calling, "Is that you, Jimmy?"

"Yeah," the boy answered. He was still looking at the robot, watching it dry the dishes.

The woman entered the kitchen. "How do you like the robot your father bought?"

"Real keen!" the boy said. He walked over to the robot. "Is it true that robots can't hurt humans?" he asked.

"Of course it is," his mother answered. "They're perfectly safe."

"He sure looks strong. I'll bet he could tear the house apart if he wanted to."

The robot moved silently to the refrigerator. He opened it and took some food out, then returned to the large sink.

The boy suddenly kicked one of the robot's legs.

The robot stood perfectly still, as if nothing had happened.

"Jimmy, stop that!" the boy's mother cried.

Jimmy frowned. "Aw, I just wanted to see if he'd do anything. I guess it's true, though. I guess robots really can't hurt people."

Two hours and fifteen minutes later a large, chunky man, brown-haired and well tanned, entered the house by way of the front door, which led into the living room. His wife was sitting on the sofa, watching television.

"Did the robot come?" the man asked.

"Yes," the woman said. "He's in

the kitchen, getting supper ready."

"How do you like him so far?"

"He's okay, I guess."

"You guess," the man said loudly. "After I spend half of our savings to buy one of the damn things so you'll quit nagging me about all the housework you have to do, is that all you have to say?"

"Be quiet," the woman said. "I'm trying to watch television."

The man's face turned red. "Don't tell me to be quiet!" he roared. "I'm the one who sweats and slaves to keep this family going. Don't you forget that! If it weren't for me—"

"All right, all right, so you're a big hero," the woman said. "But will you please be quiet? Do you want the whole block to hear you?"

The man looked through the venetian blinds at the lights of the house next door. "Look," he said to his wife in a milder tone, "I'll admit that I was wrong to get mixed up with that blonde. But that was a whole year ago, honey. How long are we going to go on like this? I can't even talk to you any more. Don't you think it's about time we kissed and made up?"

The woman stared at the television set and said, "As far as I'm concerned, we can go on like this indefinitely."

The man shrugged his shoulders and sneered. "Okay, if that's how you want it, fine! Don't expect me to be decent anymore, though. I'm sick and tired of trying to appease you for something that happened in the past! And furthermore, I'm not going—"

"Please lower your voice!" the woman cut in. "Do you want your son to hear you, too?"

"Where is the little brat?" the man asked.

"He's in the kitchen, watching the robot."

"What's he doing that for?"

"I think he's fascinated with it."

"He is eh? I think I'll take a look at the thing myself." The man walked

toward the kitchen, an angry look still on his face.

A short while later, the robot announced that supper was ready to be served. The man, the woman, and the boy sat down at the kitchen table. After the robot finished serving them, he walked away to the sink to clean the pots and pans he had used for cooking.

The man cut into a thick, juicy steak with his knife. He put a piece of it into his mouth and started to chew it. "Hey," he said to his son, sitting next to him, "this robot really knows how to cook! In fact, I'd say that he's a lot better than your mother, wouldn't you, son?"

The boy looked at his mother. "I—I don't know," he said quietly.

"Stop trying to poison the boy's mind!" the woman said.

"I simply made an observation," the man said.

The three of them ate quietly for a while. Then the boy asked, "Is it true that robots can't tell a lie, daddy?"

"Yep," his father replied. "They absolutely and positively cannot tell a lie. Look, I'll show you." The man called the robot to the table. "Do you think I'm handsome?" he asked it, winking at his son.

"According to current standards, sir," the robot said, "your nose is too large and your lips are too thick."

"Really!" the woman said. "Can't you think of anything better to do?"

The man looked at her sharply. Then he turned to the robot again. "How about my wife?" he asked. "Do you think she's pretty?"

The robot said, "Your wife, sir, is considerably overweight. She has a poor complexion and appears to be aging rapidly."

"Ha ha ha," the man said, glancing at his wife.

The woman reached over the table and slapped him across the face with

full force of her arm. Then she grabbed her dinner plate and smashed it over the robot's head.

The man laughed loudly. The woman suddenly started crying and ran from the kitchen. The boy sat still and watched with frightened eyes.

"Excuse me, sir," the robot said, "I believe I have been damaged slightly."

The man stopped laughing. "Huh? Oh, yeah, I guess you did get banged up a bit."

"I suggest, sir," the robot said, "that you send me in for repair tomorrow morning."

"Sure," the man said. "Turn yourself in first thing in the morning."

"Thank you, sir." The robot walked off to a corner of the kitchen.

The man looked at his son. "I—uh—I guess your mother's a bit high strung this evening," the man said, as a guilty look swept over his face.

"I guess so," the boy said mechanically. Then he looked at the robot standing in the corner.

"Well, don't take it too seriously, son," the man said. "C'mon, let's watch television."

As the two of them walked along the hall that led to the living room, they passed the bedroom, where the woman was sprawled out on the bed, sobbing.

"You go ahead, Jim," the man said. "I want to talk to your mother for a while."

The boy walked away and the man entered the bedroom. "Laura," he said uncertainly. "Can I talk to you a minute?"

"Go away," his wife said.

The man sat down on the edge of the bed. He stroked the woman's hair and said, "I'm sorry, honey, honest I am. I don't care *what* that pile of junk says. I still think you're pretty."

The woman continued to cry. She was still lying on the bed, face down, her head buried in a pillow.

"Please, honey," the man said, "let's

make a new start. We've both been pretty awful this last year. I think it's time for both of us to change." The man kissed the woman on the back of the neck.

The woman turned around on the bed. "But can I trust you?" she asked, still sobbing. "Will you promise to stay away from other women?"

"Of course I will," the man answered. "Honest, Laura, I haven't even *looked* at another woman the past year!"

"How about that blonde?" the woman asked. "Are you sure you can stay away from her?"

"Sure, Laura. I haven't so much as seen her since you found out. Really, I—"

A loud, crashing sound from the

kitchen interrupted him. "What in hell is that?" he said. He got up and walked to the kitchen.

The boy was swinging a large ax at the robot. He had already succeeded in severing the robot's arms.

The man stood paralyzed for a moment, watching.

The boy swung the ax again and split the robot's upper and lower sections.

The man ran toward the boy. "Stop it, Jimmy!" he shouted. "For God's sake, stop!"

"The robot said my mother is ugly!" the boy yelled hysterically, raising the ax. "He made you and mommy fight!" the boy shrieked, and he chopped down on the robot's remains.



AGAIN AN EDITORIAL ASIDE —

The people who found Lloyd Mallen's *RUSSIA AND THE BIG RED LIE* (Fawcett, 75 cents), which I propose to comment on in my next column, immensely reassuring, —were no doubt uninterested in the news that Premier Khrushchev was to bring with him to this country V. S. Yemelyanov, easily the Number 1 figure in the development of atomic energy in the Soviet Union.

Yemelyanov's title is Chief of the Main Administration for the Use of Atomic Energy. His position, despite the fact that, these last years, the task of directing the Soviet Union's rather far-reaching nuclear development has become bureaucratized, corresponds to that John McCone, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Yemelyanov has been called typical of the new generation that have come into being in the Soviet Union in recent years more or less apart from the channels of political orthodoxy. These—the successors of Kapitsa—are the new elite in a Russia that, openly and understandably, values its leaders in science and technology. These are the people who must be watched in the months and in the years to come. On their influence on the course of events depends the lives of many, many millions.....



brace yourself for mother

by KATE WILHELM

"GOOD MORNING, Sue Ann," Bart greeted his secretary pleasantly.

"Good morning, Mr. Bartlett." The girl virtually leaped at him, urgently thrusting a typed paper under his eyes, one finger raised to her lips for silence. "Did you have a nice weekend, sir?"

Hastily he scanned the sheet and belatedly remembered her words, spoken much louder than necessary. He glanced at his office door which stood opened nearly an inch. "Oh, weekend, yes, fine." His voice sounded choked even to him as the impact of the message hit him. The boss in his office waiting for him? Why? He mouthed, "Real mad?", and groaned inaudibly at her nod. Attley never went to his subordinates, but sat like an impassive Buddha as they answered his curt summons. Even as he flashed her a quick grin of thanks he was reviewing his past week or two and could find nothing in them to anger the boss. He squared his shoulders and

went inside his own office, for the first time since its presence not noticing the new gold of the sign on his door that told the world Mr. Stephan Bartlett was now General Sales Manager of General Appliances.

His simulated surprise at seeing the president of G.A. in person in his office was quite convincing, as were his effusively stressed well wishes and greetings. "Such a welcomed surprise, Mr. Attley. In fact, I was planning on obtaining an appointment with you in connection with..."

"Not now, Bart. I have things to attend to this morning, and I can't delay at present." Very drily, "Your mother paid me a call this morning. Were you aware of the fact that she was in town? I understand that she lives up-state."

"Mother? Here?" Bart's glance about his office was purely involuntary, as if he expected her to appear mysteriously from behind his desk or come crawling from somewhere near

the inter-office telecom.

"Bart, sit down!" Attley said impatiently. "As I said, I have a busy morning and this has caught me quite by surprise. It was brought to my attention that your mother didn't own one of our Kit-Robs, and I thought I'd add a little bonus to your promotion by giving her one and telling you of it later. However, it seems that she doesn't approve. She has returned it."

His face was bland and unreadable, which meant he was very angry. Bart tentatively smiled and erased it immediately to assume a sorrowful expression. "There must be some mistake, sir, I personally presented her with the Kit-Rob several years ago. That must be why she returned your gift. Mother is—uh—"

"The word is individualistic, Bart. And I fully approve. We must all maintain our individuality. In a world that for the past century has pulled us all this way and that with no regard for personal differences, it is a necessity that we nurture all the little characteristics that make for individualism. However," he reluctantly dragged himself from his favorite theme, "in this instance, G.A. might suffer." He paused ominously to allow the significance of the statement to find home. Then more genially he commented, "No doubt you can talk to her and make her see the results of her hasty action. It just wouldn't do for the mother of the sales manager of G.A. to go about saying she didn't trust its products, that she suspected them of trying to spy on the populace by planting radio remitters in them."

Bart gasped at that, "She said that?"

"Her exact words almost. And she said them many times. To my secretary, to the receptionist, to anyone who would listen, apparently. And she walked up instead of riding the lift. Said it was a device to inject her with some sort of gas that would dull her senses." The bland expression

was back and his eyes were heavily veiled as he watched Bart's face sag.

"Mr. Attley, believe me, sir, I'll have a talk with her." Bart promised fervently. "She is slightly old fashioned, you understand, and she doesn't understand all the modern wonders science has made possible."

Where could she have learned about the radio in the certain, selected Kit-Robs? And she must have been guessing about the lift. Must have been. Only two other men knew about that, and he knew Attley wouldn't have told even his psychiatrist. Wells? Ridiculous. He had been sent to Centauri Three two years ago.

After Attley had left him alone, he sank wearily back into his chair, the cloud he'd been riding for the past seven days quite mired, refusing to lift him again. "Brace yourself for Mother," he thought grimly. Sue Ann peeked around the door and he waved her into the room dispiritedly. "Give, Sue Ann. What happened, and how many heard it?"

"Oh, Mr. Bartlett, it was awful! She climbed up the stairs with those men following her! Wouldn't even let a Rob-Car take it back! Said they weren't dependable! I wonder where she found men willing to carry it up?" She frowned at the idea and then shrugged it off. "Anyway, when Mr. Attley's secretary tried to get rid of her she just sat down. Said she wouldn't budge until he came and got the—" she hesitated but continued with a rush of words, "the obscene monstrosity! He had to come out, because by that time Mr. Fagget and Mr. Shirello and Miss Rutherford and I don't know how many others were standing around her asking her what she wanted and everything." Her eyes were very large as she blithely galloped over the details, making it all sound very much like Mother.

He let her finish before he asked, "Sue Ann, how did he find out she didn't have the Kit-Rob I gave her?"

"It must have been Mr. Shirello. He's always nosing around, you know. I don't know how he finds out so much, but he always seems to, and he did want to be sales manager."

So it was Shirello. He'd have to be sent somewhere. Mars perhaps. Bart's own position was too precarious to have an overly ambitious man sniffing at his heels. He could swing that all right, but first there was Mother to attend to. The outside line sounded melodiously and Sue Ann automatically answered. She smiled at his wife and withdrew.

"Bart, something awful has happened. Brace yourself, darling, your mother—" She stopped midway, her lovely eyes widening in consternation, "Bart, has she been there?"

"She's been here, honey. But don't worry about it. Now tell me what's happened." He liked for Ivy to call him at work, unlike most of the other men. But then none of them had a wife who looked like Ivy with long green eyes and hair that flamed and demanded immediate attention. Her skin, even over the screen, was so smooth and soft, he always wanted to stroke it, to feel it as if doubting such a complexion actually existed outside the coms.

Ivy sighed slightly, "Darling, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have bothered you at work, and right now it does seem silly of me. Your mother went to school and got Stevie out on one pretence or other and they're gone. The school called me a few minutes ago to see what happened. Naturally when she showed up saying he was needed immediately they let him go. She had all her papers with her and they had no reason to doubt her. They checked her through iden and let her take Stevie with her." She was fighting hard to control herself, and not succeeding very well as she waited for his reassurances.

"OK, honey. She probably took him to the zoo or something. She'll take

good care of him. After all, she did rear me, you know. And nothing so bad ever happened."

"Of course. I knew all the time I was being childish, but I had to call anyway." She smiled her very special smile at him before she switched off.

He continued to smile fatuously at the screen even after it had cleared. He was very much in love with his beautiful wife. He knew, smugly, that she could charm the pants right off Attley himself. If she were the one behind the desk, Attley would have guffawed at the antics of her mother, but it wasn't her mother, it was his, and unfortunately he didn't have the physical attributes Ivy did. Impulsively he had Sue Ann get her back for him. "Darling, would you do something for me? I know how you feel about Attley, but would you call his wife and have them to dinner tomorrow?"

"Then there was trouble down there?" Ivy's face became worried again. "Bart, don't you think your mother will be with us several days? She always does stay a week. I mean having her and Mr. Attley together at dinner?"

"Look, honey, stop worrying about Mother. I'll handle her. And this is one time that she's going to have to do as I say, regardless."

To search in a city of seventeen million people would ordinarily have been ridiculous, but Bart knew approximately where to look. He remembered from his own boyhood the spots where she would be most likely to take a seven year old, and he made it to those places one after another. The museum of natural history, the art galleries, the science museum, the planetarium, the aquarium, the horticultural display. Finally the zoo.

"I made all the rounds," he complained to Ivy later as they waited, dulling their apprehension with occasional fizzy highballs. "I knew ex-

actly where she took him, but every time I missed them. The guard at the natural history museum remembered them distinctly. She was trying to start a tractor that was over a hundred years old. One of the type that a man sat in and plowed his fields with," he explained as she looked blank. He waved it aside. "And in the art museum they made quite a disturbance when she insisted the Art-Rob exhibit was an insult to an art lover. It seems she tried to remove them personally, but was restrained." He closed his eyes and let Ivy murmur comforting words to him for several moments before he added, "She eluded the Guard-Robs by short circuiting them with steel knitting needles."

"Oh, darling! I'm so sorry!" Ivy rested her head against his chest then and said in a small voice, "I'm beginning to think she must not be entirely...well."

"Dr. Kranston agreed to examine her in the morning," Bart said flatly. "God, Ivy, I hated to do it, but I ask you, does she act like a sane person?"

"Stella Kranston told Eva Whitehall that she can hardly wait to get to Centauri. Isn't it odd why a person like Stella would want to go?" Ivy changed the subject that was so obviously painful to her husband.

"She must be pretending for his sake. Kranston has never made any secret that he was preparing himself for it. A psychiatrist on Centauri Three! Seems a complete waste to me." He added sadly, "Seems all the people I care anything about are leaving. Wells, Tedley, Kranston."

They both jerked to their feet then as the outer door of their apartment began opening stealthily. A pert, unlined face seemingly full of sparkling eyes and teeth flashed at them. "Oh, you're up." She pushed the door open all the way and marched inside leading a grinning red haired boy behind her. He looked apprehensively from

one to the other of his parents, and then to his grandmother for encouragement. She nodded to him and instantly he flew across the room whooping. "Dad! I've had the most fun! We went to the zoo and Grandma showed me which animals you can eat and which ones will eat you up and we went to the place where there are tractors and airplanes and we went to the street market and ate hot waffles and we—"

Behind his excited voice Ivy repeated in horror, "Animals you eat? Mother, what in the world did you tell him?"

"Well, people did eat bears and deer and raccoons and rabbits, you know." Mother examined Ivy critically then and finally drew the girl to her, "As lovely as ever, but a tiny bit too thin." She kissed her solidly on the cheek and took no notice of the constraint Ivy showed. "I'm sorry I didn't call you first, but I thought you'd probably tell me no, and I wanted to give the boy a holiday."

Bart gently disengaged himself from his son, "Mother, you know they have planned holidays at the school. They had the impression something was wrong, or they wouldn't have allowed you to take him. They show them all those things when they are prepared to understand what they're seeing."

"Planned holidays!" she retorted indignantly. "Nothing's as much fun as an unplanned holiday. Every boy needs to play hookey. Good for his ego. And as for seeing things in the group, all any of them can see is each other's back."

"Stevie, you've been crying!" Ivy clasped the boy to her, "What happened? Are you all right?"

"Oh, Mother. I'm all right." He pulled away from the examination she was making. "Grandma spanked me." There was pride in the statement and he looked up at his grandmother grinning broader than before.

"Spanked you! You mean she hit you!" Ivy drew her breath in sharply and turned in consternation to Bart.

He also took a deep breath, but at the sight of the happy face of his red-headed boy, expelled it just as quickly. Quietly he said, "Better go get ready for bed now, Stevie." He nodded to Ivy who wordlessly followed the lad from the room. At the doorway Stevie paused and called, "Don't forget, Grandma. You'll tell me about the cowboys and Indians."

"I'll be in directly," she promised.

Bart waited until they were alone. "Mother, why did you spank him?"

"He sassèd me," she answered simply. "If there's anything I can't stand, it's a sassy young one."

"Mother, it isn't good for them to be hurt physically. All the doctors agree that it does something to them that isn't good for them. He was expressing himself, and you made him repress it. We don't want him to be repressed." He kept the words simple and concise, controlling himself with difficulty.

"Would you rather he had one arm chewed off by a tiger?" Mother asked sharply. "I told him to keep back from the cage and he sassèd and wouldn't mind, so I spanked him."

"Mother, don't you want to keep his love?" He asked desperately as she regarded him with amusement. He knew she understood that he had often wanted to spank the child himself and hadn't, and now resented it because she had merely done it without first considering the act.

"Oh, I think he likes me well enough," she reassured him with confidence.

Bart felt he was losing ground before he'd even had a chance to plant his feet in it. Very firmly he said, "Mother, sit down. We have to have a serious talk."

Ivy checked the table and nodded to herself. She glanced at the flowers,

but for once the Kit-Rob hadn't neglected to put water in the vase. Bart must have adjusted the thing somehow. She steadfastly refused to meet Mother's eyes as she made little tasks for herself to kill time until time to get dressed. Mother seemed completely unaware of her, entirely absorbed in the knitting she busied herself with at all times. Soft music filled the apartment, but this too Mother ignored and hummed what Ivy was certain were naughty songs. Often Mother would smile to herself and nod as if pleasant thought occupied her mind. She was the picture of gracious age and sweet gentility. Ivy pulled her gaze from the incongruous anomaly. Far from being the simple soul she seemed, she was very clever indeed to have fooled Dr. Kranston so completely. Ivy remembered his keen look as he told her, "You have a very remarkable woman for a mother-in-law, Ivy. She's as sane as any of us, and a darn lot smarter than most."

"But, Dr. Kranston, the things that she does could be disastrous for Bart's career. Would a sane mother jeopardize her son that way? You know this promotion is the most important thing in the world to him."

"Relax, Ivy. Attley has no sense of humor, that I'll grant you, but actually Mrs. Bartlett has every right in the world to express herself, her likes and dislikes, and if someone persists in sending her gadgets she doesn't want, I can't blame her for returning them. Can you?"

"Of course not." Ivy answered simply with a helpless little gesture of her slim hand. On the one side, Mother was right; but when being right could be harmful to her only son, could being right be right? She was very confused. Dutifully she asserted, "But she should consider what it might do to Bart."

She was recalled from the curious interview by Mother's sudden exclamation, "Oh dear! I knew there was

something I had forgotten to tell you. I asked that nice doctor and his wife to join us at dinner. You don't mind, do you? He said they'll be leaving soon for Centauri and I thought it would be a nice gesture. And too, a whole evening with only the Attleys' company—"

"Mother! You didn't!" Ivy felt her knees shaking and sat down quickly to give them time to steady. She moaned softly to herself, "I'll have to adjust the Kit-Rob myself; there isn't time to wait for Bart. More plates. More cocktails."

Quite placidly Mother slipped her knitting into the oversized bag that was never away from her side. "Come along, dear. I'll fix the monster for you. I know all about those things." Very kindly she patted Ivy's hand. "You actually don't know how, do you?" Ivy shook her head miserably and she continued gently, "I thought not. Well, I don't like the blamed things, but I'm not afraid of them." Briskly she led the unprotesting Ivy to the gleaming kitchen where the robot was rolling back and forth preparing dinner. "Now, let's see," she ruminated, "I guess this one's like the one that fool Attley sent me. The book said the back plate covers the adjustments." She turned a knurled knob and beamed pleasure when the machine came to a complete stop. "Un huh. Now it was set for six, and we want eight. That shouldn't be hard." Within seconds the robot was again wheeling from the refrigerant area to the electronic stove and the two women withdrew.

Ivy said gratefully, "Thank you, Mother. I never could make one of them do what I wanted it to." With a frankly curious stare she asked, "Mother, why don't you like things like that?"

"The Kit-Rob you mean?"

"All of them."

"For most people they are fine, but not for me. And I suspect not for

you. Ivy, did you ever go fishing? Or hunting? Or make a pie? Or polish silver until you could see yourself in it and laugh at the distorted images it threw back at you?"

Ivy stared at her in bewilderment.

"Of course not, child." Mother said gently, "But you'd like it. Now you go slip into your dinner gown and if they start getting here before you are ready, I'll let them in. And remember I promised Bart I wouldn't say a thing to Mr. Attley that isn't in perfect taste. So don't worry."

Ivy left her puzzling over the strangeness of Bart's mother. Bart arrived only a short time before the guests did. And it was Mother who greeted them at the door after all.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Attley. Impetuous of me to come to your office as I did, and I do appreciate having the Kit-Rob, only I won't use it. But if you want to tell everyone I have it, that's your business."

"Mother!" Bart hurried to the door.

"Mrs. Bartlett!" Attley looked as if he wished he were elsewhere.

"What I mean is that I enjoy cooking and I don't see any use letting something do it for me just so General Appliance people can get rich. And you do, you know. A good cook has to love the people she cooks for and has to know what they like and don't like, and has to see them placing it in their mouths and know she is giving them not only food, but pleasure. A thing made out of metal doesn't enjoy anything unless it's a short circuit." To Dr. Kranston she said naively, "Do you think that would give them a sensation of rest or a nefarious thrill like a little innocent sinning gives us humans?"

"Oh, I'm sure it gives them nothing, but what you said about a cook loving her task, I'm sure that's so. Since we decided to go to Centauri, Stell has learned to cook and she gets a good deal of satisfaction from doing it, and I have put on weight."

"Really, Dr. Kranston? What's the difference?" Attley took it up interestedly. "The Kit-Robs can do anything in the kitchen that a human cook can, and tests prove it can do it better."

It was Stella who answered in her almost shy voice, "It's this way, Mr. Attley. Days when I'm in a hurry, I throw things together sort of and the more the better. The Kit-Rob never would do that. All it can do is on its tape and those recipes, as you know, have been tested to be perfect. But a human cook isn't perfect. I like butter, and now that I have plenty, I'm using plenty. And sauces on things a perfect cook would never think of putting them on, but we like them. I'm extravagant these last few months. We snack more. You know how it is with the Kit-Robs, you never dared take anything from the kitchen without a major adjustment on it for fear it would try to use that ingredient before you replaced it. Once you have one go berserk because it can't find something that's listed on its tape, you never want to go through it again."

"It took the factory three weeks to adjust ours," Mrs. Attley interrupted. "Remember how you sneaked another one in to replace it?" Her husband glowered at her.

Bart leaned forward determinedly. "So you're actually going on the next flight?"

"Less than two months to wait now." Enthusiasm fired the doctor's face as he spoke. "I feel like a kid waiting for the circus. Every night I know something will come up the next day to prevent its happening, and the day passes anyway, but I'm still holding my breath about the next day."

"But aren't you afraid for Stella, Doctor?" Mother asked gently. "Such a delicate girl. I have heard it was very hazardous."

Ivy frowned at her slightly and she

fell silent at the unspoken rebuke. Ivy said, "That's nonsense. Actually the women who came to America with their husbands were much frailer than the modern girl is, and they made it fine. Any girl worth keeping is willing to go anywhere her husband wants to."

Attley snorted, "It's a lot of foolishness, I say. There's only space for the barest essentials in the ships and there's nothing on Centauri but a wilderness and a bunch of savages who'd like nothing better than to dine on Earth women and children."

"Oh, it's probably not much, if any, worse than the New World was to our ancestors, and look at it now. All a wilderness needs is for a determined race to decide it's worth settling. And God knows we need the space." Bart's statement, begun in a positive tone, ended downbeat as he realized it was his boss he was contradicting. He touched the button on the table that called the Kit-Rob in with a batch of fresh cocktails.

Mother watched it uneasily as it wheeled dexterously among them, pausing for a given number of seconds before each person before moving on to the next. She caught Bart's hard look and tore her eyes away from it. When it approached her, she was groping in her voluminous bag for the skein of wool that had fallen to the bottom. The Kit-Rob waited the time allowed and began backing away from her. Quickly she realized she was at fault and she reached out for the iced glass. In her haste she bumped the hand of Attley who was automatically reaching for his own drink. Both drinks were unbalanced and in the next second, almost as inevitably as a recoil from heat, Attley was drenched. Ivy screamed softly, and rushed to him with her eyes large pools of what was almost fright. Mrs. Attley began laughing in the background and Bart shot her a puzzled

glance as he too began mopping up his boss.

Sublimely unaware, the Kit-Rob kept its backing and starting movement. With a mumbled, "If you'll excuse me," Attley pushed Bart aside and still dabbing at his soaked clothes glanced about as if to get his bearings. All through it Mother had sat transfixed by the suddenness of the events. Now she suddenly seemed to realize what she had done and she leaped to her feet, upsetting her bag. The large ball of yellow yarn unrolled as it crossed the room leaving its gay sunny trail stretched out after it. Still carrying out instructions via the magnetic tape inside it, the Kit-Rob made its last stop before Stella who looked at it blankly, a suspicion of a smile on her face.

When the ball had rolled by him, Attley automatically made a movement as if to stop it, but it rolled past him before he had his hand down. Now he began to pull at the unwound yarn, only to see the elusive ball roll again, this time stopping almost directly in front of the Kit-Rob. "Get it!" he called then, "that stuff might jam the wheels." He lunged toward the ball at the exact second the tape told the robot it was time to return to the kitchen. There were still two untouched glasses on the tray that was a part of the gleaming servant. Attley's momentum carried him past the Kit-Rob and in a continuation of the same movement he came up with the ball of yarn. The jerk upward brought the unwound thread up in front of the relentlessly rolling robot and too late Attley knew it was upsetting the glasses on the tray. With a wholly inarticulate cry he grabbed for them, but again, as if fate had arranged for him to be twice bathed in excellent liquor that night, he received the contents of both glasses down his front. Without a word he dropped the ball and turned and fled from the room.

For a full minute there was a com-

plete silence. Then Bart said heavily, "I suppose I should go see if there's anything I can do." No one answered and he repeated more surely, "I'll go see if there's anything I can do. Perhaps he can wear something of mine."

Mother kept her eyes on the floor until he had closed the door after him. When she lifted them to meet Ivy's tragic face staring at her accusingly she said appealingly, "I'm sorry, dear." Her face contorted in what appeared to be tears of regret until she blurted, "But it was so funny!"

Later Bart stalked the floor of the bedroom savagely, "Ivy, what happened here tonight? Am I going crazy or did that damned thing spill everything it touched on Attley on purpose, or didn't it?"

He didn't wait for her reply but raged impotently, "It couldn't have happened that way. It couldn't! I'll wake up and Mother will be back in the country and we'll all be sane again and Attley will call me son instead of Mr. Bartlett." He swung around to face her, "Did you hear him call me Mr. Bartlett? Or did I dream that too?"

Meekly she confirmed his fears, "He said Mr. Bartlett."

His eyes fastened on her unseeingly, he fumed, "First the drinks, four of them all over him. Then at table the chilled vichyssoise, then it didn't give him the lobster, and there were dinners for seven only, then the salad on his head, and the water in his plate— My God, why? Why? Why?" He finished with his voice rising to near hysteria.

Ivy touched his arm lightly, "Shush, darling, you'll waken Stevie and Mother."

"Shush! Don't tell me to shush! Do you realize he was made a fool of this evening. No man will be made a fool of in front of his wife and a doctor and his employee. No man will stand for it. He'll fire me! That's what he'll do!"

"All right, then let him. Bart, you're acting as if it's all my fault! Those things just happened. So what if he does fire you, you aren't an idiot who can't get another job, are you?"

"Are you mad? Get another job! Where? Everyone knows I've worked for G.A. for eleven years. Who do you think would have me now?"

"What do you mean? What's wrong with G.A.?"

"If you only knew some of the things a man has to do to rise to be a sales manager these days you wouldn't ask. And I did them all the same as anyone else would have done. Why do you think I have a regular appointment with Kranston every Friday morning? How do you think I managed to get you this nice apartment? Do you have any idea how rare a five room apartment is in New York? Believe me I didn't get it by smiling pretty at the super and saying pretty please. I had to dig up all the dirt I could on him and threaten him with it before he let me have it. And I was luckier than most because I had the information staff of G.A. to help me dig. The other guys had to do their own digging or else had smaller or poorer organizations behind them. How long do you think we'll be able to keep this place if I'm kicked out of G.A.? Maybe I could find something Attley forgot to cover deep enough." He mused over it a scant second and swore vehemently, "He's too careful for that." Suddenly he stopped at the look of revulsion on Ivy's lovely face. He realized he had said too much and wearily he dropped into the relaxor chair that automatically began soothing him. "Ivy, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said all those things to you. Forget it."

"Forget it! For the first time in my life I'm beginning to understand how the place is run and you say forget it." Scornfully she raked him with her eyes that could, and now did, spark green fire. "Tell me more, Bart.

Tell me how you managed to get introduced to me. I'm beginning to think it might not have been as simple as it seemed at the time. Did you blackmail Wanda into letting you attend her parties so you could meet an eligible girl? And Dr. Kranston, do you actually pay him with money or do you promise not to tell his secrets if he treats you?"

"Cut it out, Ivy. So you didn't know about the apartment, but that's the way it's done. And I said to forget it. We've got to find a way to make up to Attley. If only Mother hadn't come up none of this would have happened."

"Oh, don't go blaming it on your mother. All she's guilty of is being honest!"

"Ok, rub it in, but how long would you have stuck it out in one of the projects? Or on a farm like I did? How long would you have lasted staring at chickens and cows and pigs all day? My God, you've never seen a cow outside the zoo in your life. I wanted to keep you in the kind of surroundings you were used to, and I did by whatever way I could. It's as simple as that!"

"And I never cared where I lived! You are a snob. All the years we've been married, you've never once taken me to your home. You think you're better than your own mother!" She eyed him coldly, "Well, I'm glad tonight happened. I thought I understood you, but I was wrong. I even wanted Stevie to grow up like you, to follow in your footsteps. But if he shows signs of it, I'll beat him myself."

Bart stared at her in dismay, "Honey, you're excited. It's not as bad as that. Business is rough, I'll admit it, and a man does things he shouldn't, but basically he doesn't have to be that way."

Ivy ignored him and gathered up bed clothes. "I'll take the living room. I'm afraid we'd only keep one another

awake tonight and you must be fresh enough to eat crow by morning."

Savagely he snatched the pillow and coverlet from her and stalked wordlessly from the room. "Eat crow," he snarled to himself. "That's one of mother's expressions. Damn it, why did she have to come?"

He looked in on Stevie before he faced the problem of sleeping in the living room. With Mother in the guest room there was no alternative to the couch, but then if Mother hadn't come in the first place he wouldn't even be trying to arrange himself on it to sleep. Oddly he was remembering himself at Stevie's age, listening to Mother talk about cowboys and Indians and how it mustn't happen like that again. And the talk of the day had been nothing but Centauri, and they had made their plans to go when the time came. And how she had personally taken him to all the exhibits even as she had taken Stevie. He dropped into a fitful sleep finally still basking in the pleasant memories of pre-Attley days.

When he reached his office the following morning the glow of his dreams had faded completely and insistently Ivy's pat expression drummed through his mind, "Eat crow." Sue Ann dimpled prettily at him and he snarled back at her. Her smile was replaced immediately by a look of resignation.

"Will you want your mail right away, Mr. Bartlett?"

"No! And don't bother me!"

"No sir."

He ineffectually slammed the door, an impossible feat with a door controlled electronically. It infuriated him more that even so futile a gesture of rebellion should be denied him and instead he slammed the chair back from the desk. The chair went farther than he had intended and after he had picked it up and dragged it back to seat himself in, he grinned a bit. Un-

bidden came the vision of Mother spanking Stevie before the tiger's cage. He wished he had witnessed it. Must have made quite a stir. Ruefully he recalled one or two of the lessons she had administered to him. Had he ever sassed her? He couldn't remember. Inordinately the thought became important and vainly he tried to conjure up a scene when he might have been inclined to sass. The time she had insisted he stick to school until he had his degree. And her insistence that he become a salesman for G.A. Why it had been her idea! He had forgotten. He had wanted to join up with the crew of the Starview. The first ship to transport women and children to Centauri. He had wanted to help in that magnificent undertaking, but at her insistence he had instead accepted the job offered by G.A. Just eleven years since the first contingent of women left for Centauri and now there must be thousands of them there. Women were strange creatures.

Reluctantly he became aware of the flashing light of his inter-office telecom and flicked it on. "I told you I won't be interrupted..."

"Bùt, Mr. Bartlett, it's Mr. Attley. He's awfully mad, sir, and your mother..."

Unbelievably he repeated, "Mother? Again?"

"Yes sir. She's with him now and he's threatening to have her arrested!" Sue Ann wailed, "And I just couldn't let that happen without telling you. His secretary told the receptionist who told Millie down in the library and she called me."

Like a man in a daze Bart flicked off the distressed secretary and mechanically walked past her toward the archaic stairs. His feet were leaden as he climbed the seven flights to Attley's office. He ignored the protests of the receptionist and the outstretched hands of the secretary as he headed straight for the massive door

that led to the president's private office.

He could hear Attley even before the door opened. "Madame, if you say that one more time, I'll sue you. Do you understand? I'll sue you!"

Bart went in. Mother was standing before the monstrous glistening plastic thing that was Attley's desk, completely dwarfed by the size of it. Her face wore a frightened, bewildered look as she turned to see her son's trance-like entrance. "Bart, I believe your president is ill. Perhaps you should send for that nice Dr. Kranston."

"He's a psychiatrist, Mother."

"I know that. But perhaps that's what Mr. Attley needs. He seems just a bit unsettled."

"Bart, get that woman out of here!" Attley choked on the words and pointed toward the door. "Get her out and come right back!"

"That woman, as you call her, happens to be my mother, Mr. Attley. And don't shout at her." To his mother, "Will you please tell me why you came back here."

"Of course, dear. I came to apologize for last night. It must have been my fault. For you see, I adjusted the Kit-Rob myself when I saw that Ivy was afraid of it. I must have made a mistake. Like I told that nice young man down in the other office."

"What man did you talk to, Mother?" Bart's voice remained deceptively calm.

"Why that nice Mr. Snorkel. One of the pretty girls downstairs pointed him out to me. Something about publicity."

Bart exerted his will power to the breaking point and finally pulled his eyes from her to confirm it with a glance at Attley's apoplectic face. "Snorkel?"

"Yes, you fool! Snorkel! In one day she's done more to make G.A. the laughing stock of New York than our competitors could have done in the

twenty-five years we've been operating."

"Snorkel!" Bart repeated softly.

"Bart?" Mother looked from one of them to the other timidly. "I did wrong?"

"Exactly what did you say to Snorkel, Mother?"

"Oh," she answered pertly, "I figured if he was with the publicity department, he was the one to tell, about accepting the Kit-Rob from Mr. Attley. I mean, if you want people to know your mother uses it, who can do it better than a publicity man? I told him I wouldn't use it, but he said he wouldn't tell. And I told him all about the mistake I made the other day in bringing it back. And I accepted full responsibility for what happened last night," she concluded brightly.

"Oh, dear God in heaven. Everything," Attley moaned.

"Bart, will you kindly tell me why that man is carrying on like that?" Mother asked exasperatedly.

"Mother, Snorkel isn't with our company. He's, well, like a reporter. He was going to do some publicity work for us. A column about the new department we are starting. He was doing it because he owed Mr. Attley—a favor. And now he has this." As he watched enlightenment spread across his mother's face he thought momentarily he saw something else there also. It passed quickly and Attley had his attention with his next words.

In a voice thick with rage he announced, "We'll have her committed, and if he uses that piece you can sue him for defaming a non-responsible person."

Mother gasped slightly and Bart grinned at her mirthlessly, "Kranston gave her a clean bill only yesterday."

"Kranston!" Attley drummed his fingers lightly on his desk. "Get hold of Melton. He'll do it. He'd damn well better!"

Bart sighed then and looked again at his mother who stood quietly by his side watching him quizzically. "Melton wouldn't dare stand up to Kranston."

"Listen, Bartlett," Attley rasped, "she told Snorkel about the lift. If even a suspicion of that story reaches Louis Gorman, he'll go to court. Ever since he resigned his office in Amalgamated Plastics, he has gone from doctor to doctor trying to find out why. He's certain we had something to do with it, especially since we merged with A.P. the following week, but so far there's only suspicion. He doesn't have the faintest idea of how. This will give him all he needs." His florid face might have been carved from red sandstone as he raked his eyes over the slight figure of Mrs. Bartlett. "Melton will have her committed by morning."

Almost casually Bart demurred, "She's my mother, Attley, remember? And she isn't insane. A little eccentric, but not insane."

"I'll break you, Bartlett! I'm warning you, I'll break you into such tiny pieces they'll never fit them back together."

"Sure you will, and meanwhile the story hits the screens and all the little puritanically minded stock holders begin protesting and Gorman goes to court to get his company back, and maybe you even go to jail for illegal use of drugs. Who knows?"

"You were in it too, Bartlett. You'd be right there with me."

"But what difference could that make to all those disintegrated bits of the former sales manager of G.A.?"

Attley met Bart's steady gaze for a minute before his own eyes fell. He sighed, "Mrs. Bartlett, won't you have a seat. Please forgive me. My terrible temper. It gets the best of me at times." He even held the chair for her and only then looked again at Bart. "Well, what's the deal?"

"Send me to Centauri as sales man-

ager of the office the company is opening there. At present salary. Not that it will do me much good there, but it's—comforting."

"Now you're talking crazy. What office on Centauri?"

"The one you sent Wells to open. Remember?"

"Look, Bart, we're not kids playing games. You know as well as I do that Wells isn't with the company any longer. There isn't any branch in Centauri and there won't be for another fifty years at least."

"Not until there are enough G.A. service men to keep them monsters adjusted," Mother interjected softly. They both ignored her.

"Okay, I'll open it myself. Wells should have gone ahead and opened it, but I guess the land got him?" It was a question he had long debated down deep in his mind.

"He sent the message back inside six months that he was through with the company for good. What it amounted to was paying his passage and getting him started on another world, not as a dead broke squatter, but as a wealthy man."

Bart grinned and waited. Attley glanced from him to his mother who sat meekly apart from the conversation. "What about her?"

"You can get her a priority for travel. Kranston gave her the works and says she's completely healthy. In every respect."

"But she must be seventy!" Attley protested.

"Sixty eight!" Mother spoke up indignantly.

"Like I said, you can get her the priority for travel. I don't know how and I don't care. But I'll see to it that Snorkel forgets whatever she told him, and likewise you don't know how and you don't care. Agreed?"

They were on the farm, the two red heads bent over the nearly black one as he gingerly began milking the cow.

Stevie squealed excitedly as the first thin flow of milk sounded against the bucket. Bart flashed a grin at Ivy who was watching with delight as the pail was half filled. Together they walked back to the old farm house. "You know," Bart said soberly, "I understand exactly what Kranston meant when he said every day he waited for something to happen that would make the trip impossible."

Ivy squeezed his arm with hers and tried to match his long steps. "Bart, never until now have I asked what made all this come about, but bit by bit I've been piecing it together. Your mother knew that you actually wanted to go to Centauri, just as she did. And she knew you had buried it so deep in your desire to get ahead in business, for my sake, that you weren't even aware of wanting it anymore. But why didn't she just remind you the way other mothers would. Why drag all that information out of Wells over the past two years and use it in such a bizarre way?"

"Because, as you said, I was a snob. I had my eyes on Attley's job and it was all I could see. That and keeping my own. When she made me realize what all I was willing to do to keep the gold sign on the door, she brought back all the old memories of the plans we had made."

"And why didn't she let you go when you first wanted to, you know, when they sent the Starview out?"

"Don't you see, I would have come back. That wasn't the way. I wanted to tame the land, to mold it the way land must be molded for settlers. She guided me all the way, with my wishes or against them. It was her idea for me to become a super salesman. Soil and water conservation and innovations have to be sold to the people. Humanity to the humans and civilization to the Centaurians. It will take a good salesman to convince them that's

what they want."

"And all the years she kept hoping and hoping you'd remember for yourself. Until you became Sales Manager, and then she knew you were lost unless someone took drastic action, like crossing up a Kit-Rob with a tiny electro magnet." She grinned wickedly remembering the fateful dinner. Casually she asked, "Do you want to tell me how you made Snorkel tear up those notes Mother gave him and write that glowing account of you instead?" Very hastily she added, "But only if you think you should."

Bart looked at her in amusement, "But that's the simplest part of all. The minute I looked at Mother, I knew she was lying in her teeth. Not knowing who Snorkel was would have been stupid, and no one, but no one has ever accused her of stupidity. All her weird behavior up to that point was stage dressing to prepare Attley to believe anything else she might come up with. To this day he hasn't asked a single question about Snorkel. Wouldn't he explode if he knew Snorkel printed exactly what Mother told him?" He kissed the very tip of her nose where a faint freckle had appeared since their three weeks of country life. "You know, I think for the first time Attley respects me. He thinks I have something on Snorkel bigger than he has. He couldn't have killed that story."

"And so you and your family will be transported and set up on Centauri, courtesy of G.A."

"I promise you, it's my last deal."

"It better be." Mother's voice floated out from the kitchen window along with the aroma of apple pie. "You go trying to force Centauri folks and they'll damn well lynch you."

Ivy and Bart automatically turned their gaze skyward and breathed in unison, "Oh, Centaurians, brace yourselves for Mother!"

“Lethe”

by ROBERT BIERMAN

I (a Y) HAVING reached the age of curiosity wanted to know where I had come from (oh, not the biological facts with which any infant curiosity was soon assuaged, but the origin of my race), and so instinctively I had come to the museo-temple to be satisfied by the local ‘minor-memory’, *Mnemonikos*.

Along with other Ys and Xs I lay prone on the floor with head resting on the atomrode cushions awaiting Revelation. My eyes stared at the plain unadorned functional ceiling, but they saw not because I was lost in unguided contemplation of the nature and appearance of *Mnasthai*, ‘The Great Memory’. Of course no one was really able to ‘visualize’ what *Mnasthai* looked like; even the Guardians whose instincts were conditioned to minister to local ‘minor-memories’ (and perhaps even the most exalted Guardians who attended ‘The Great Memory’) were unable to reconcile the Great Paradox: ‘memories’ had no

physical existence—the metallic, altar-like atomronic machine, with its artificial blinking eyes of light and its concealed memory-spools, which was on the dais in the center of the museo-temple was just an eikon of *Mnemonikos*, not the ‘minor-memory’ itself—and yet it was said we fleshlings were made in the image of *Mnasthai*. Then I no longer contemplated these things as my own consciousness gave up its independent existence and became one with *Mnemonikos*, its memory becoming mine.

Long long lifetimes ago, far far away on another world, the ancient ones—our ancestors—lived and multiplied and became filled with Pride. Pride in their own potentialities because each of them ‘remembered’ private memories and used their ‘memories’ to create things. Some ancestors were different than others having more memory and more ability to use memory. So great grew their idolatry of the attributes and accidents of

memory that they began to build idols in the form of electronic brains; and in this idolatry they turned one upon the other lest the neighbor possess a more powerful idol—and thus the world and its population came to an end. But before final doom *Mnasthai* with memory of these things left the world with the most worthy and faithful of attending missionaries, and came here to begin our race.

I became aware of the ceiling once more: I had lost rapport with *Mnemonikos*. Around me the others were rising with the look of blank peace on their faces; fleshling Xs and Ys they had come into the museo-temple, now they were leaving as mature flesh. Still lying prone I suddenly realized with rising panic that I was *different*. Instead of progressing with the others, I had retrogressed: I was *still remembering* what *Mnemonikos* had remembered.

A mature flesh has no memory. X or Y 'sustains' a knowledge, for example, that in the near future X or Y was to go to the museo-temple to reconcile a curiosity; but this belonged to the Instinct rather than the Memory. A question raised by curiosity once answered, the neurotic condition of curiosity was cured (just as an unpainted part of a wall, to use an archaic analogy, lost its 'focalness' once a brush had blended it in with the rest of the surface).

I arose at long last to see the Guardian watching me. There was an anomaly between the unconcerned expression in his eyes and the persistence of his gaze: my lingering presence must have upset some delicate sense of order. With a new emotion (which I later learned the ancients called 'guilt') I wanted to explain by asking questions, hoping that answers might be part of the Guardian's instinctive position. I defended the silence and blurted out hurriedly, clumsily the symptoms of my 'remembering psychosis'.

"The best thing you can do is not to come to me, but have your brain washed by the psychiatrist."

"But Guardian, can I not ask questions, perhaps I just have an over-active thyreo-curiosity?" The Guardian's face did not show any sign of encouragement (or rebuff), but I suddenly saw my own face for the first time, reflected in a shiny spot of *Mnemonikos* ('Great Memory' forget me, was I developing a mortal case of Personality?). New feelings and urges which I did not find word symbols for until much later, continued to develop spontaneously (I felt 'cunning'): "Guardian, answer me this: if our ancestors made *Mnasthai*, did they not therefore exist before 'The Great Memory'?"

"That is heresay. Memory is not physical but psychical, and has always existed. It remembered Itself until It decided to physically demonstrate Its diversity: even our primitive ancestors knew this and many worshipped It under the holy, ineffable tetragrammaton: J V N G; but because the ancient ones came to believe they had the same power as *Mnasthai*, they lost their worthiness to be the physical receptacles of 'The Great Memory' so *Mnasthai* transubstantiated himself—with the intermediary aid of a few faithful and enlightened ones who were used as a means of giving outward signs so all should know the curse upon them and the loss that was theirs—into the form of *Mechos*. Many prophets proceeded this event and warned of the coming doom by fire, giving our ancestors time to repent but, though many heard, few heeded and these elect were transported to the holy city of Millennial where 'The Great Memory' rests today in the role of *Deus ex Machina*."

"But Guardian, if *Mnasthai* can exist without us and we neither sow nor reap but simply reproduce and preserve ourselves for many 'rebirths' by

food, drink, and rest what is the purpose of our existence?"

"That is a Great Mystery. On the other world there were lower creatures: one with wings called 'bird' as an example, that built shelters of straw not knowing how or why, but they never questioned or refused to do so. Our life is the highest goal which was sought after by, and promised to, our ancestors: our state is Necessity and by the very intrinsic quiddity of *Mnasthai* the law of our lives can only be determined from motives of Indifference, never Capriciousness. Therefore we need not know and must not question. I can see you still 'remember'; go to the psychiatrist!" A feeding machine had come in search of the Guardian and the latter instinctively followed it; mine was probably seeking me.

I did not return to my quarters 'till long after third meal and then I had to flee to escape the feeder for I had a desire not to eat. I also had a desire not to visit the psychiatrist, instead I kept repeating my small and newly acquired memory, over and over, no longer regretting the symptom but developing another new feeling: 're-joicing' in the fact that I was now different—a certain indication, I knew, of a morbid and perhaps chronic, condition if not attended to. But the psychiatrist could not help those who did not wish to be helped (and I remembered hearing once that those who were incurable were quarantined on Pluto if discovered). My only problem seemed to be one of escaping detection; fortunately the Guardian enjoyed and practiced the same complete freedom as any well-adjusted layling in the state of indifference guaranteed by a constitution which lacked memory or curiosity, so I was safe in that quarter. In an open space beyond the buildings, I lay down to the death, which the ancients called 'sleep', feeling another difference of my own: 'fatigue' (I am learning the

old symbol sounds quite well); the one thing left to disturb my waning consciousness was the 'fear' that my newly discovered memory might perish too.

In the rebirth, which the ancients knew as 'awakening', the first thing I did was to test the strength of my difference: memory was still with me. Pleased, I returned to my quarters with my new protean nature changing me into yet another person: a 'hungry' one—but my abnormalities I learned were contagious: the feeding machine had developed frustrated parts in my absence because it had been unable to administer the last two meals, so for the first time in my many lives I had to help feed myself.

Adjoining the museo-temple was the chapelibrary containing shelves and tiers of small-memoire spools about the memory of *Mnasthai*. Here those mature fleshs who became ill from time to time with disorders of curiosity or 'emptiness' too small to require the services of the psychiatrist went to affect a cure. It was also the one place where the Personality marks in my face were least likely to be noticed. Most Xs and Ys visited the chapelibrary a dozen times at most during their lives, I began to frequent it every 'rebirth'—relying upon the absence of memory in others to protect me—and there I began to 'remember' who among the ancients had been the bad ones who precipitated the annihilation of the other world and who had been the good ones chosen to build *Mechos* and sailed to Millennial to start a new order ('The War Mongers' were the villains who dropped 'cobalt bombs' on their own world, slaughtering innocents along with guilties); other things I began to 'remember' about their laws—but one thing I forgot:

Still a novice in memory and cunning I neglected to consider the possible consequences of the contagious nature of my disease: I was so

'greedy' to remember the entire contents of the chapelibrary that I failed to notice that my repeated presence was upsetting the equilibrium of the Guardian who began to develop sympathetic symptoms of memory. So quietly one memory, jailer machines surrounded me with the solid metallic wall of their interlinked frames and I knew what I had 'remembered' about Pluto was true and I could not escape.

Pluto, I am told by the missionary on board the interne ship, is not too bad: the externals of life go on much the same as at home; the suffering of the inmates is due to their own memories. But I know I shall not regret knowing at last, for sure, that I am not the only different one; this has brought 'contentment' or 'tranquility' or 'happiness'—I am not sure of the exact word symbol. I would rather live on Pluto or anywhere else with painful memories than stay at home without them; the only thing I regret about leaving is that I shall never be

able to see *Mnasthai* (the missionary on board who wears the mallet and scythe symbol of The Order Of Machina says that some patients are eventually cured and return). I have asked the missionary about 'The Great Memory' but though he has seen *Mechos* he has never been one with Its memory (only the Chief Rote is worthy of that) and so the description is not satisfactory.

It is this same kind missionary however who gave me the empty spool which I have filled with these memories which I am about to enclose in this stolen space-bottle preparatory to casting it adrift hoping that some other race may sometime find it for I have made a terrible discovery: my memory has become so developed through constant exercise that I have mastered the secret of using it like the ancient ones to arrive at 'Knowledge', and now I *know* that it is my race who is mad and I, alone, who am sane.

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THE RUSSIAN MOON ROCKET

by VAN ROWE

THE FIRST object sent by man from one cosmic body to another was a metallic spherical capsule weighing 858.4 pounds bearing pennants and the emblem of the Soviet Government. It crashed into the moon at a speed of about 7,500 miles an hour at two minutes and 24 seconds after midnight, Moscow time. This was 5:02:24 P.M. (E. D. T., New York), on Sunday, September 13, 1959, five days before the occurrence of a full moon.

Lunik II consisted of a multistage rocket and a space capsule packed

with scientific instruments which made observations on magnetic fields, belts of radiation and spatial densities, and radioed the findings back to earth, together with a 3,324 pound last-stage rocket which boosted the capsule on to the target during the last leg of its journey. The Russian sphere hit the moon after traveling a distance of 236,875 miles in about thirty-five hours—its arrival being under calculated by only 84 seconds.

Shortly after the launching of the rocket on Saturday, in Soviet terri-

tory, its final stage achieved a speed of seven miles a second to escape the gravitational pull of the earth. Then the remaining part of the rocket and the instrument container, which was separated from it, slowed down as they coasted toward the moon. On Sunday, at 7 P.M., Moscow time, the space vehicles were five hours away from Luna and 201,250 miles from the earth. At this point the capsule entered the moon's gravity field at a speed of 1.44 miles a second.

A few minutes before the container struck the moon at 2.06 miles a second a special altimeter went into operation inside the sphere, transmitting at a frequency of 183.6 megacycles. It relayed data back to earth concerning the angle and speed of approach to the moon, giving a kind of countdown to the moment of impact.

The timetable of this historic flight reads thus;

About 6 A.M. Saturday (1 P.M. Moscow time) the Lunik II rocket was launched from its station somewhere inside the U.S.S.R.

7:36 A.M. — The Soviet press agency Tass issued the first official statement that the rocket had been launched.

8 A.M. — The missile was 49,000 miles out from the earth over New Guinea.

10 A.M. — 63,125 miles above western Sumatra.

2:39 P.M. — A sodium cloud was emitted and was observed from several countries.

3 P.M. — Rocket about 93,000 miles over Tanganyika.

7:50 P.M. — 125,000 miles from earth, beyond the halfway mark to the moon.

3 A.M. Sunday — 160,311 miles into space.

7:15 A.M. — The rocket and capsule had reached three-quar-

ters of the distance to the moon.

10 A.M. — Tass announced that the missile was 200,000 miles from earth and would shortly enter the gravitational field of the moon.

5:02:24 P.M. — The capsule reached the surface of the moon after a journey of thirty-five hours.

There was no official word on whether the one and one-half ton (without fuel) rocket had been "guided," or that the Russian scientists had had "the possibility of correcting its flight."

A leading German scientist stated that the feat could be compared to hitting the eye of a fly six miles away with a small-caliber rifle. Rocket authority, Willy Ley termed the hit "superb ballistic rocketry, with a little luck, too."

Both the rocket and capsule carried radios emitting beep signals as they flew at varying speeds and in slightly different trajectories toward the moon. One of the two radios transmitting from the sphere, as with the one in the separated but trailing last-stage part of the original rocket, had become considerably weakened about five hours before the collision. Soviet tracking of this part of the rocket was based on the signals constantly beamed to earth as well as direct observation at one short interval during its flight.

This was made possible by the emission of a bright yellow sodium cloud from the rocket when it was about 90,000 miles out from the earth, (9 P.M. Moscow). The sodium flare was not visible in Moscow because of overcast skies, but it was photographed by at least two Soviet observatories, in the Caucasus and in Uzbekistan, Central Asia.

At the moment of impact, the moon was on the wrong side of the earth for observation and radio listening

located in the United States. The moon rose in the New York area, coming into sight and enabling radio monitoring, at 5:06 P.M. (E. D. T.), about four minutes after the rocket crashed into the lunar landscape.

Britain's huge radio telescope at Jodrell Banks, probably will provide the Western world with its most precise independent information, a spokesman for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration said in Washington. Professor A. C. B. Lovell, director of Jodrell Banks, London, reported that the beep signals from the rocket came in loud and clear until they suddenly stopped, indicating that the capsule hit the moon.

The Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Cambridge, Mass., alerted the United States Project Moonwatch stations to track the Soviet rocket and if possible to photograph the landing. Among the stations of the world-wide network asked to provide data were those in Paris, Heidelberg, Germany and South Africa.

Information regarding the miniature crater formed by the impact will be forthcoming in the near future from the Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin. Dr. Gerard P. Kuiper, director and a leading authority on the moon, has stated that he can observe features less than twenty feet high on its surface.

Astronomers of the Hungarian Observatory in Budapest spotted a dust cloud raised on the moon when the rocket landed. Radio Budapest reported that a black ring was visible for more than an hour after radio signals from the capsule stopped on impact. The Hungarian scientists also said they believed that a new crater was cut into the moon's sand and rock surface by the rocket.

The Soviet Government has not as yet released any pictures or detailed descriptions of the rocket or

the instrument container. It is generally felt that the Lunik II capsule is similar to the one sent past the moon by Soviet scientists last January. If so, then it will have a surface of pentagonal stainless steel plates, most of which will bear the inscription reading "C C C P (U.S.S.R.) September 1959."

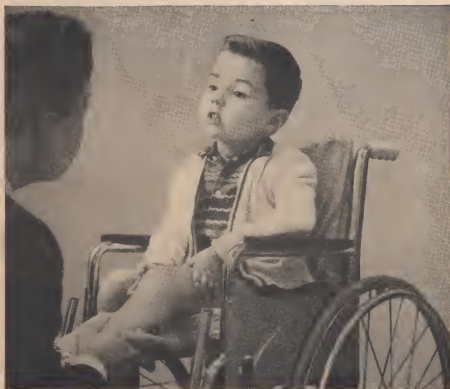
The pennants housed with the instruments in the container, for which special but unspecified measures were taken to "preserve" them through the ordeal of impact, bore the inscriptions "Salute to the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics" on one side, with the hammer and sickle inside a garland and "September 1959," on the other. The composition of the metal pennants was not announced.

Soviet scientists reported that just prior to its launching certain precautions were taken to sterilize the capsule so to prevent micro-organisms of earth from landing and contaminating the moon. Although the organisms would not have survived the searing blast accompanying the encounter in any case, the capsule was hermetically sealed and filled with an unidentified gas to achieve this end.

The Russian government had followed the recommendations of a futuristic international body known as CETEX—the Committee on Contamination of Extra-Terrestrial Exploration, which last October, urged that all nations undertaking to probe the moon, take necessary steps so not to contaminate the slight atmosphere or any form of pre-life substances that might possibly exist upon its surface.

Some future space-goer to the sixth largest moon in our solar system might very well discover the metallic pennant fragments of Lunik II, scattered between the arid Seas of Serenity, Tranquillity, and Vapors....

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